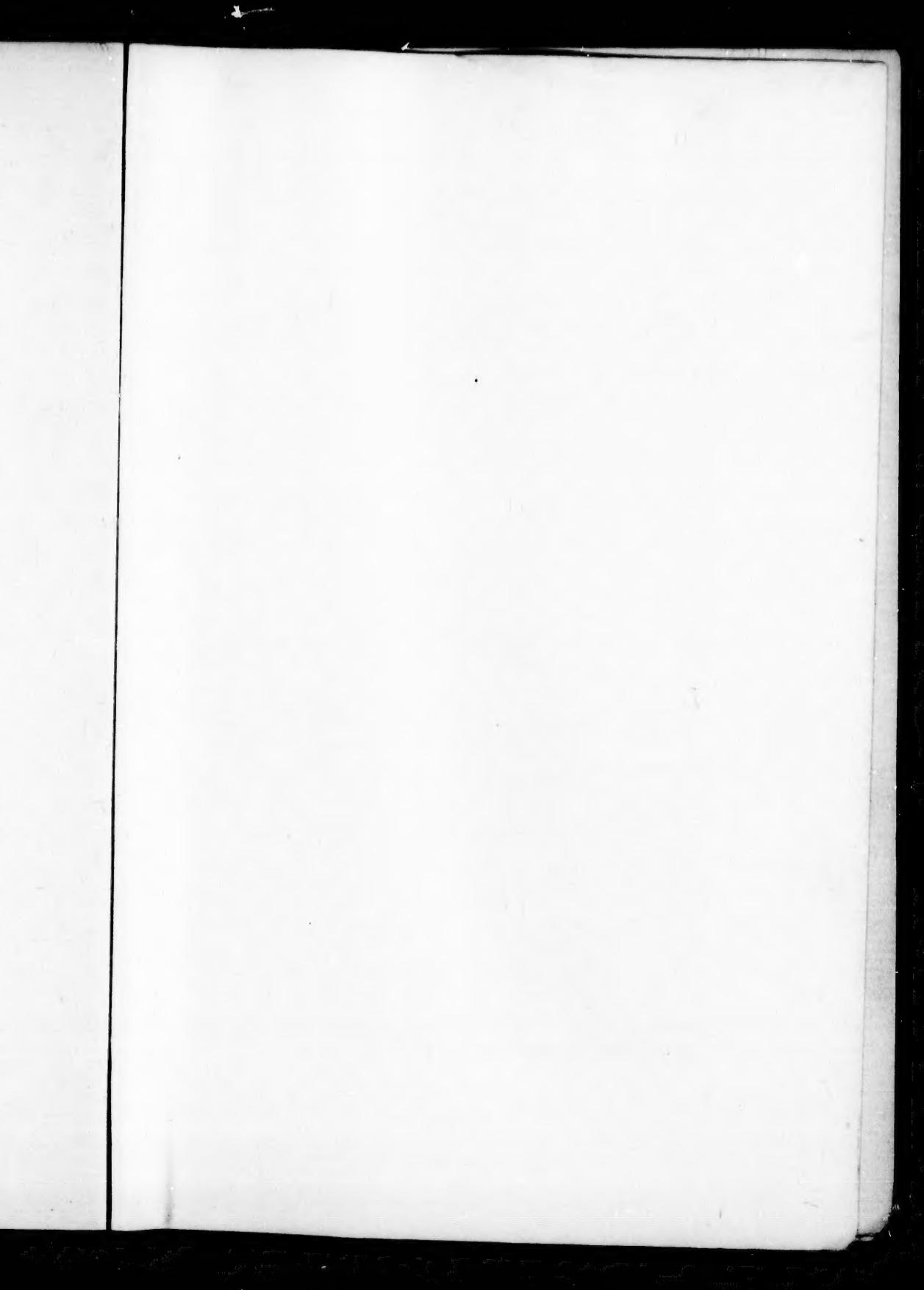
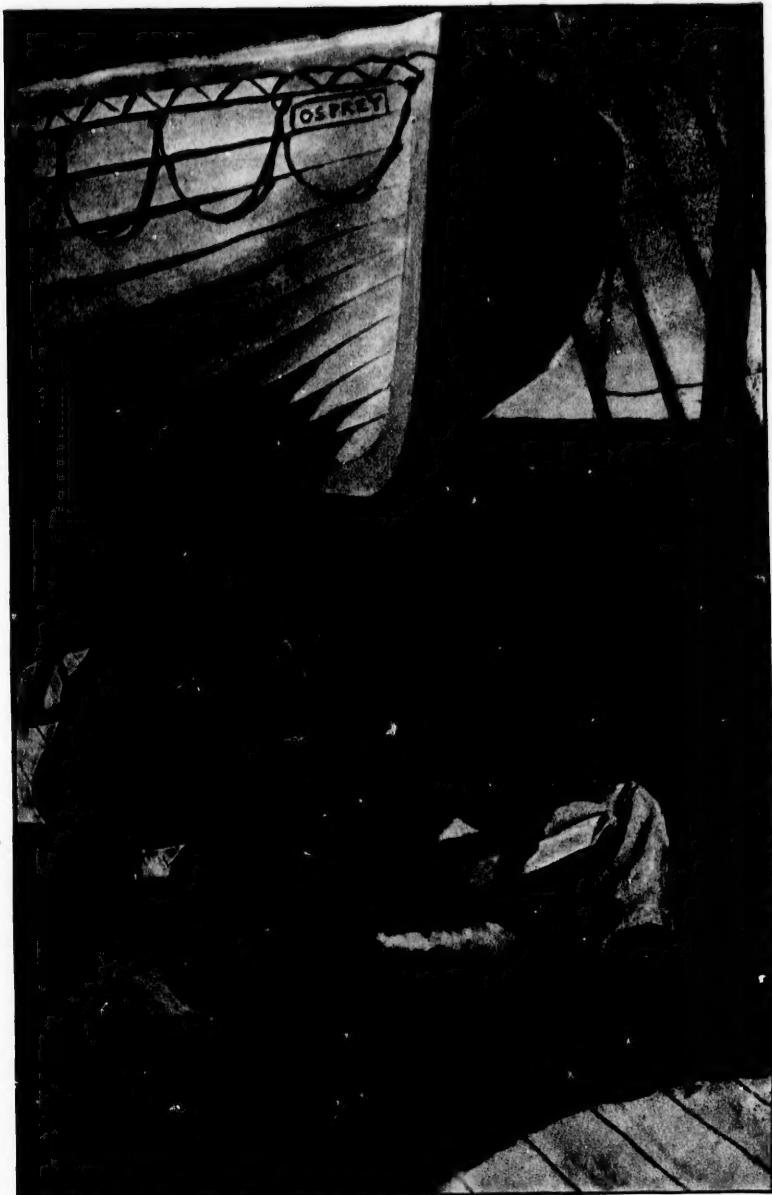


IN THE SWING OF THE SEA





A PROMISING PUPIL.

IN THE SWING OF THE SEA,

BY

J. ^{James} MACDONALD OXLEY

AUTHOR OF

"ON THE WORLD'S ROOF," "BAFFLING THE BLOCKADE,"
"THE BOY TRAMPS," "THE ROMANCE OF
COMMERCE," ETC. ETC.

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IN THE SWING OF THE SEA

CHAPTER I

HIS FATHER'S SON

If the sea is in one's blood, there is small chance of contentment ashore. Yet Mrs. Newton had hoped in her heart that it might fall out otherwise, and so had fled from sight and sound of the ocean far back into the Massachusetts hills. Soon after there came to her the dreadful tidings of the loss of her husband's ship, with all on board, while hunting the sperm whale beneath the Southern Cross.

So poignant was her grief at Captain Newton's death, that it seemed to her as though only one tie bound her to life—her baby boy, whose big blue eyes, true limpid pools of love and joy, once and again reproved her for allowing the waves of sorrow to overwhelm her.

"My darling Ralph! my precious lamb!" she would exclaim, in keen self-reproach, clasping him passionately to her bosom. "Have I not you to

live for? God forgive me, that I should be so selfish! He doeth all things well, I know, and He has given me you to comfort my stricken heart. I will be brave and bear my lot, looking to Him for the courage and grace I need."

Second only in strength to her desire that Ralph should grow up in the fear and knowledge of God, was her determination that he should not follow his father's vocation. "The sea took my husband from me," she murmured; "it shall not have my boy."

In spite of his untimely death, Captain Newton—whose reputation was that he never returned with a "clean ship," and who had once brought back a "full ship" after no more than a year's absence—left his little family in good circumstances, and his widow was able to purchase a snug property, entirely to her own mind, in a pretty village nestled among the western hills. A branch of her own family had their home here, by whom she was cordially welcomed, and, ere long, she found herself so comfortably settled in her pleasant surroundings that life began to take on a brighter hue, and the bitterness of her sorrow to be assuaged.

The care and training of Ralph absorbed her time and thought. No other duty or pleasure was ever allowed to interfere, and certain it was that his childhood gave every promise of developing into a maturity that would richly repay her devotion.

His resemblance to his father was so striking that it gave her a thrill of pain, at times, by sharply reminding her of her loss. Nor was the likeness of form and feature only. So far as might be judged at an early age, he was in mind and heart a miniature Captain Newton. Indeed one of his uncles, who had known his father well, and was greatly tickled at the way the boy "took after him," dubbed him the "little captain," and prophesied that, as sure as he lived to manhood, he too would tread the quarter-deck.

Mrs. Newton was much perturbed by the prophecy, and begged her brother not to repeat it in Ralph's hearing. "It would break my heart, Roger," said she, with trembling lip and tear-filled eyes, "if Ralph should go to sea. I want him to be a landsman, so long as I live, at any rate; so please put no notion of the kind into his head."

Uncle Roger answered with a smile of assurance and sympathy: "Certainly, Hester, since you so wish it. The boy is your own, and you have the right to make of him what you can. But, at the same time, a good seaman is something far better than a poor landsman; and if the little captain has the love of the sea in his heart, it might spoil his whole life to keep him ashore."

Mrs. Newton threw up her hands in earnest protest against this kind of argument. "Oh! don't

talk that way, Roger," she replied. "Ralph must not take to the sea while I'm living;" and then she hurried away to hide the tears that threatened to overbrim her eyes.

Of course Ralph knew nothing of his mother's concern as to his future. He had thought only for the present, and a very active happy present he was having.

As his boyhood advanced he became more and more noted for energy, enterprise, and courage. Without being unduly reckless, he was not easily daunted, and his companions came to understand that there was little within the range of a boy's powers he would not attempt if they dared him to try it. These traits, combined with his frank, open manner and generous spirit, made him very popular with his playmates, who thought no game or sport was complete that lacked his presence.

He had a natural aptitude for athletic exercises, using either hands or feet to equally good purpose; and, in the various simple sports known to the village boys, could hold his own even with those who had more years to their credit.

But it was his standing in school, rather than his proficiency at play, that rejoiced his mother's heart. Here his ambition to excel found another outlet, and she fostered it sedulously, for in her heart she cherished a hope, never expressed in

words to any one, that perhaps her boy might in due time be guided to the grandest of all earthly employments—the preaching of the Gospel.

One thing in Ralph that showed how he took after his father was his passion for the water. No kind of play afforded him such keen delight as that which had the water for its base, and the fact that Hilldale could offer nothing better for the exercise of this passion than an ordinary mill-pond, seemed to matter very little to him. The pond was deep enough to swim in, and broad enough to permit of the navigation of sundry rafts, which he was an adept at constructing ; and throughout the summer he was more likely to be found in it, or on it, or beside its banks, than anywhere else.

His best friend in the village was a retired sea-captain, who had come to this quiet haven after two-score years of tossing about the watery wastes. Captain Bowline had great skill with the jack-knife, and was glad to fill up his abundant leisure by cutting out miniature vessels, which were not merely to look at, but could be sailed on the pond. In time there came to be quite a little fleet of these, sloops, schooners, and even brigantines ; and on a breezy afternoon in midsummer very lively and exciting regattas would be held, with the genial ruddy-cheeked captain as starter, judge, and final referee.

Ralph's entry was a tiny brigantine, completely

rigged in every particular, and so cleverly modelled as to sail with astonishing speed. No other boat could beat her on even terms, and it was often necessary to impose some kind of a handicap upon her in order to give the others a chance of winning.

In these sailing matches care had always to be exercised lest the little craft should be drawn into the current leading to the flume, for, once started upon that swift course, they must inevitably shoot down to where the big wheel would smash them into splinters at a single blow. When Captain Bowline was present he provided against this contingency by stationing himself before the intake of the flume, in a clumsy wooden canoe, from the stern of which he could command the course, and at the same time prevent any of the vessels from getting into danger.

One afternoon, however, which was particularly favourable for sailing, the Captain was not on hand, having gone over to a neighbouring village for a visit. Notwithstanding his absence, Ralph took out his brigantine, for he had promised Ned Bailey to race him the length of the pond, allowing his schooner a start of twenty yards.

The breeze blew directly toward the dam, at one side of which was the opening of the flume, but this did not give the boys any concern. They knew they could set the rudders of their tiny craft so

that they would make a straight course for the end of the dam farthest away from the flume.

Accordingly, they launched the two little vessels with every sail spread; and when the schooner had got her agreed-upon start the brigantine set forth in chase, while the boys ran around the margin of the pond to be ready to catch the pretty contestants.

"What a grand breeze! Don't they look as pretty as a picture, Ned?" shouted Ralph Newton, with his eyes fixed upon the swiftly-moving yachts.

He felt the more enthusiastic because his brigantine was already gaining upon the schooner so rapidly that she must certainly beat her if the breeze held to its then strength.

"They do, indeed," responded Ned, breathing hard, for they had to run at their best pace; "and your boat's catching up fast, isn't she?"

For the first half of the course the wind held steadily, then it suddenly dropped, causing the two racers to lose their headway and to veer about in a helpless fashion that sent dismay into the hearts of their young owners, for it seemed as if they must come together and get their rigging entangled. But just as they were about touching, the breeze sprang up again, and with renewed vigour. Now, however, it blew from another direction, with the effect of sending the yachts straight for the flume.

At the sight of this Ralph cried out in alarm—
“Oh look, Ned! The wind’s changed, and it’s driving them toward the flume. If we don’t catch them in time they’ll be smashed by the wheel.”

Nerved to a supreme effort by anxiety for his beautiful brigantine, Ralph sped along the edge of the pond at a rate that left Ned far in the rear, and, reaching the end of the dam, began at once to climb out upon it, although the footing was very scant and slippery.

“Take care, Ralph!” panted Ned, fear for his playmate’s safety overshadowing concern for the yachts. “You’ll fall off there. Come back and we’ll get the Captain’s canoe.”

But Ralph paid no attention to either appeal or advice. He could think of nothing save the imperilled vessels, and he was willing to run any risk to save them from destruction. Balancing himself upon the slimy timbers with astonishing steadiness, he succeeded in crossing the top of the dam, and reaching the flume gate the fraction of a minute before the yachts, which came on impelled by both wind and current.

Ned Bailey, standing on the bank, gave a cheer at seeing this. “Hurrah, Ralph! you’re just in time. Now you’ve got them!”

But he spoke a little too soon. The sides of the flume were high and the water was low, and in

order to seize the yachts Ralph had to bend over as far as he could reach.

Just how it happened he did not know. Whether his strength suddenly gave way, or the treacherous timbers disappointed his grip, certain it was that, just at the moment when he thought he had accomplished his object, he slipped from his difficult position, and, with a sharp cry of terror, fell into the arrowy waters of the flume.

Ned, seeing him disappear, re-echoed the cry, and, inspired by his companion's peril to undertake what the fear of losing his yacht had not stirred him to, he sprang out into the dam, and with nervous energy made his way toward the flume.

For the first moment after his fall Ralph shot downwards toward the deadly wheel without being able to do anything to check his descent. Behind him followed the yachts, bumping against each other and entangling their rigging, so that they were bound to share a common fate.

Just before the flume gave upon the wheel it made a slight angle so as to turn the corner of the mill, and at this point it was braced by a number of cross timbers. Ralph's quick eye caught these as he darted down, and, making a desperate effort, he threw out his right arm.

He missed the first, but he caught the second, getting a nasty bruise on his hand as he did so.

The rushing waters strove hard to tear him away, but he held on firmly, thus stopping not only his own swift flight to death, but that of the little vessels also, for his body blocked the flume and prevented them from getting past. Here he hung, utterly helpless to do anything more for himself, yet bearing so terrible a strain that, unless rescue came soon, his hold must loosen, and he be swept away to death.

But at this critical moment Ned Bailey's cries attracted the attention of the mill hands, and they came rushing out to see what was the matter. The foreman quickly grasped the situation, and, leaping down to the flume, caught Ralph with his strong right hand, just as the latter was about to let go in sheer exhaustion. The next instant he would have lifted him out of all danger but for his earnest plea : "Save the yachts too! don't let them get past."

The foreman could not help laughing at the boy's solicitude for the playthings in the midst of his own peril.

"All right, Ralph; I'll not let them go past," he responded, and, lowering his feet into the water, he effectually checked the little things' further progress until they could be lifted out of danger.

Ralph was not a bit the worse for his exciting experience, but, as may be expected, it greatly alarmed his mother, and she exacted from him a

promise that he would never again sail his yacht unless Captain Bowline was on hand in his canoe.

This was rather hard upon Ralph, but he had no thought of disobeying. Although so full of life, and at times apt to be forgetful of others' interests, his mother's word was law to him, and it was with right good reason that she would say, as she patted his head or drew him to her heart, "You're the joy and comfort of my life, Ralph, darling! What could I do without you?"

As the years slipped by, Ralph grew in knowledge and stature, and, it might be added, in favour of man, until the time came when it was necessary for a decision to be arrived at as to his future. The village academy could do no more for him in the matter of education; and the question was whether he should enter college or take up some other career.

Were the matter dependent altogether upon himself he would soon have settled it. He did not want to go to college. A studious or sedentary life had no attraction for him. The desire of his heart was for travel and adventure; and, had he been perfectly free to carry out his own inclinations, he would have gone to Boston and sought engagement upon some good ship bound for the other side of the world.

But he clearly realised that his mother would

never consent to such a course of action; nay, that it would well-nigh break her heart were he to insist upon it, and so he dutifully kept silence, for her happiness was of far more moment to him than his own.

The question was still undecided when, one evening as he came home hot and tired after a lively time with the other boys, he was met by his Uncle Roger, looking strangely grave and troubled.

"I was just going for you, Ralph," said he, in a tone unusually soft and tender, as he laid his hand upon his shoulder. "Your mother fell ill very suddenly . . ." Here he stopped, as if unable to say any more; and Ralph, looking anxiously into the kind old face, read there the terrible message that the lips were so reluctant to frame.

CHAPTER II

OFF TO SEA

HURRYING home with wildly-beating heart, Ralph found his aunt and several other ladies in the house, their tear-stained faces telling without need of words that the worst had happened.

"My poor, dear boy!" exclaimed Aunt Hannah, her tears breaking forth afresh as she threw her arms about his neck. "What can I do or say to comfort you? It is so awfully sudden. May God give you strength to bear it!"

There was little to tell. Mrs. Newton had been sitting at her window chatting with a neighbour, and knitting busily when, suddenly, the needles dropped from her fingers, and, with a faint cry that would have been hardly audible in the next room, she fell back in her chair with eyes closed, never to be reopened upon this world of sense. Nothing could have been more painless than her death. The heart failure, long anticipated by herself, but kept a secret from Ralph and from all but Uncle Roger, came to her as gently as the touch of

a summer zephyr, and she passed into the presence of Him whom she had lovingly, faithfully served from very childhood.

Ralph for a time was dazed by the shock of this sudden bereavement. He went about as in a dream, hardly knowing what he did. His mother had been the central figure of his life, and the world without her seemed strangely empty and dreary. But, of course, as the days went by, his fresh young spirit gradually regained its normal attitude, and he began to seriously consider what would now become of him.

The manner of his mother's death had prevented her giving him any parting injunctions, and he was left practically the master of his own fate except so far as he might be guided by the advice of his relatives. The result of a consultation with them was that he decided, solely out of deference to what was known to be his mother's earnest wish, to give college life a trial at all events, even though he should not complete his course there.

This decision quite satisfied Uncle Roger, and Ralph was looking forward to the autumn, when he would enter upon this new experience with curiously - mixed feelings—at one time shrinking from it with positive repugnance, and at another being impatient for it to begin—when the adage that misfortune never comes singly, had fresh

illustration in his case. Captain Newton had invested the bulk of his earnings in a bank, at that time supposed to be of the most undoubted solidity. Since then, through a combination of fraud and mismanagement, it had been brought to ruin; and, just at the time when it was most important that Ralph's independence should be insured, he found himself face to face with the necessity of earning his own living. This cruel misfortune completely disarranged his plans for the future. His uncle was far from being a rich man, and had his own cares, so that no help could be expected from him.

The giving up the prospect of college did not cost Ralph a very deep pang, but the problem as to what now to turn to perplexed him sorely. Only two alternatives seemed to present themselves, either to join his good uncle on the farm, or to accept Deacon Foster's kind offer of a place in his store, where the worthy man was carrying on a prosperous business.

Neither of them attracted him, and he was in a miserably-unsettled state of mind when, as it chanced, there came to the village a visitor from the sea-coast, one of Captain Bowline's friends who had run up to spend a few days with him in his rural retreat. This was Captain Sampson of Nantucket, master of a whaling-ship, not long

back from a successful two years' cruise after the sperm whale in the southern seas. Of course Ralph at once knew of his arrival, and lost no time in making his acquaintance. He was a bluff, hearty, red-faced man in the prime of life, and very well pleased with himself and the profitable, though perilous, avocation he followed.

On learning that Ralph was the son of the Captain Newton who had once befriended him in a very substantial manner when he was in a desperate plight, Captain Sampson manifested a warm interest in the boy, and was eager to know if he could be of any service to him.

"I'm a debtor to your good father for more than I will ever be able to repay, my lad," he said with unmistakable warmth. "He stood by me and got me out of a sore difficulty, when many another man would have left me to shift for myself."

Ralph was encouraged by this to open his heart to the veteran mariner, confessing his longing for the sea, and how distasteful to him was the idea of such a life as now seemed to be in prospect for him.

"Oh, my lad!" exclaimed Captain Sampson, "you're a chip of the old block beyond a doubt. It's the quarter-deck, not the farm nor the store, that's waiting for you. I've no call to meddle in your affairs, but I can't help just expressing my

opinion, that you'll be far more likely to find a place for yourself at sea than you ever will on land. Mark my words, Ralph."

Ralph did mark his words. They were all that was needed to bring him to the point of decision. From the moment of his first meeting with the weather-beaten whaler, his blood had been coursing more swiftly through his veins, and his pulses had been throbbing with the inspiration of new thoughts and hopes.

In Captain Sampson's coming there was surely something providential, and the words he had just uttered opened wide the way for Ralph to proffer the request that was uppermost in his heart. He made no preface. He went right to the point.

"I've always wanted to go to sea, Captain Sampson," he said, his lips trembling for very eagerness. "Will you let me go with you on your next voyage?"

Like many others who are free to offer advice, the Captain was a little taken aback by its being so promptly accepted and acted upon.

"Well, I don't know about that," he responded after a moment's hesitation, pulling at his shaggy beard in manifest perplexity. "I wasn't just thinking of your taking ship with me. You see I'm nothing but a whaler, and it might be better for you to lay another course than whaling,

although your father didn't do so ill at it either."

Ralph's face fell as he listened, and the sight grew dim in his eyes, but just at this point Captain Bowline came to his support.

"Take the lad with you, Hiram," he exclaimed, bringing his big horny palm down with a resounding clap upon his friend's knee. "Why should he not go a-whaling, as his father did before him, and who better could he go with than you? Don't you see his heart's in it, and he'll never be content at anything else?"

The upshot of the matter was that, greatly to Ralph's delight, Captain Sampson consented, on condition that Ralph's relatives did not oppose the idea.

On being consulted, Uncle Roger promptly acquiesced.

"I told his dear mother more than once," he said, "that Ralph would not be likely to settle down to anything ashore until he'd had a taste of the sea at any rate. But she'd never hear of it while she lived. Now she's gone to her reward, I don't see that the boy's bound any longer, and as to a whaling voyage, I should say it would be the very thing, for if it does not cure him of his hankering for salt water, it'll show that he was not cut out for any other kind of life."

The other members of the family concurred with dear old Uncle Roger, although Aunt Hannah's tender heart was deeply touched at the prospect of her dearly-loved nephew going forth to face the perils and privations to which his father had succumbed.

The way being thus made clear, the next thing was to get Ralph ready for the voyage, as Captain Sampson expected to sail within a fortnight. The days that followed were full of excitement and bustle that centred about him in a way he found particularly pleasant. He was, for the time being, the most important personage in the village. Everybody was interested in his project and preparations, and so many were the tokens of his friends' good-will, that one chest did not nearly suffice to contain them all, and a second one had perforce to be obtained, although Captain Sampson sniffed somewhat scornfully when it was shown him.

"You'll not be keeping those gimcracks long, I reckon," he said, with a grim smile; "they'll not be of much account on shipboard."

The articles thus contemptuously designated were certainly of a very varied character, and well calculated to invoke the rough badinage of the occupants of the forecastle. There were woollen stockings, scarfs, and mits galore, not to

mention a big wadded quilt from fond Aunt Hannah, who was determined that the dear boy should not shiver in his bunk if she could help it. Many other useful things were given Ralph, and altogether he had, by the time the packing of his chests was completed, an outfit such as few sailors ever took aboard.

When the time came to leave Hilldale, he first realised how attached he was to the village and his kind relatives and friends, and how deeply he would feel the parting from them.

The gathering at the coach-office was large enough to mark the departure of some highly-important personage, and the driver had to delay his start full five minutes in order that all the leave-takings might be accomplished. Many a warm kiss was imprinted upon Ralph's brow by women whose hearts were full of sympathy for the motherless boy, and many a hearty "God speed" and "Good luck to you!" came from the lips of men who hoped that their boys might not be left alone in the world before they had grown to manhood. As for the younger people, the most of them envied Ralph heartily. He was going forth into the great world, perhaps to sail right around it ere returning. He would visit far countries, and see strange people. His life would be full of novelty and adventure, while they con-

tinued in the old humdrum existence, which would henceforth be all the duller because of the loss of his lively presence.

At last the coach must be off, and with Captain Sampson and Ralph upon the box-seat, it rolled down the village street, followed by a parting cheer.

No incident marked the journey to Boston, which famous old city Ralph now saw for the first time. He was too shrewd to give himself away by manifesting open-eyed and open-mouthed astonishment, nevertheless the sights and sounds of the New England capital filled him with delightful amazement.

The long lines of huge stone buildings, a single block of which could house the whole population of Hilldale; the narrow, tortuous streets, thronged with hurrying people, and roaring with carts and carriages of all kinds; the great shops, whose brilliant windows seemed to display the products of the world—these things at first bewildered, then fascinated Ralph. They made his past life, so uneventful in its even tenor, seem like a long sleep from which he had only now awokened, and he felt thankful that Providence had so ordered his way as to bring him out into this new world of wonder.

"What a big place Boston is!" he exclaimed

with a sigh of admiration, as they drove slowly along towards the hotel where Captain Sampson always stopped. "It wouldn't be hard for a fellow to get lost in it, would it, sir?"

Captain Sampson smiled in a superior way.

"Easy enough if you don't know your bearings, my son; I've always found it a bit of a job navigating these crooked streets, and once I got pretty well lost myself."

They remained in the city several days, the Captain having some business to attend to, and Ralph, being left pretty much to his own resources, amused himself by going forth on exploring expeditions. In this he succeeded very well, always finding his way back to the hotel in good time, until he began to think that there was no risk of his losing his way, no matter where he might go. One afternoon he accompanied Captain Sampson down to Water Street, where, after a prolonged search among the wharves, the Captain found the vessel he was looking for.

The Captain was an old friend of his, and the two cronies found so much to tell each other, not having met for several years, that they decided to make a night of it at a favourite resort of seafaring men near by.

Ralph was now rather in the way, as his own quick perception told him, and he said he would

go back to the hotel and await Captain Sampson's return.

"Are you sure you can make your courses all right?" asked the Captain, well pleased at the suggestion.

"Oh yes, sir," replied Ralph, smiling confidently, "I kept a good look-out as we came along, and I can ask people when I am not sure which way to turn."

"All right, my lad," said the Captain, with manifest relief. "Here's a bit of silver for you to buy some sweets for company's sake as you go along."

Ralph pocketed the coin with thanks, although it seemed a little absurd for such a big fellow as he was to be thus treated like a school-boy. But to have refused the tip would have been to offend its giver, and he was too sensible to make any such mistake.

"Don't wait up for me. Turn in when you feel like it, Ralph," was the Captain's parting injunction, "I can't just say when I'll be getting back to the hotel."

"All right, sir," responded Ralph, and off he went up the street in high spirits.

"A right fine lad that, Marline," said Captain Sampson, following the youthful figure with approving eyes. "The sea's in his blood, as it was

in his father's before him, and he'll come to something if he lives, or I'm no judge."

Ralph had no time to spare if he would reach the hotel before dark, so he walked briskly, although he saw many things he would have liked to linger over.

He had gone some distance when his attention was attracted by a crowd gathered at the head of a wharf to his right. Of course, he could not resist the temptation to see what was happening, and pressing his way into the throng he discovered, with feelings curiously compounded of horror and interest, that there was a fight in progress. A sailor and a landsman, both the worse for liquor, were pommelling one another furiously, while a rapidly-increasing throng of spectators spurred them on with shouts of encouragement and brutal oaths.

Although the sight sickened him, Ralph for a moment was fascinated by it, and just then the cry was raised—"The peelers! the peelers! They're coming!"

Instantly the onlookers, actuated by a common impulse, took to their heels, and Ralph, without knowing why, followed their example, darting off towards an alley that opened out ahead of him.

CHAPTER III

WAITING TO SAIL

THIS sudden flight of the crowd was in reality quite without reason, for the police were concerned only in the capture of the two disturbers of the peace, which they presently effected after a sharp struggle. But Ralph, carried away by the temporary panic, recked not of this, and kept on running until he had put several blocks between himself and his fancied pursuers. Then he pulled up, panting for breath, and sought to resume his course to the hotel. Taking the first turning, he kept along for some minutes, counting upon thus getting back to Water Street again. It was now growing dusk, and the shops, every second one of which seemed to be a liquor saloon, grew bright with flaring lights. The people in the streets were, without exception, so rough and degraded in appearance, that he shrank from addressing them, although he was anxious to ask his way.

"I guess I've got myself into a bad fix," he murmured as he pushed ahead, wondering why he

did not come out on Water Street. "It's beginning to look as if I were lost, and this isn't just the best part of the city to be lost in."

He was right enough on this point. It was very far from being the best part of the city to be lost in, and he stood in no small risk of being the victim of a highway robbery before escaping from its meshes. He noticed the sinister-looking men lounging at the saloon doors giving him a searching glance, and muttering something to one another as he hurried by, and from the bottom of his heart he wished himself back on Tremont Street, where the hotel stood.

"What should I do if they should attack me?" he asked himself apprehensively. "They'd soon overpower me, no matter how hard I fought them."

A little farther on he came to a part of the street where there were neither shops nor saloons, and he was just about breaking into a run so as to get past it as quickly as possible, when a big man darted out from a dark archway, and, seizing his arm, dragged him back to the gloom in spite of his vigorous resistance and cries for help.

"Let me go! what do you want of me?" he panted, as he strove to break away from his captor's grasp.

"Fork out your ticker and your money first,"

was the reply, spoken in a kind of growl that sounded more like the utterance of some animal than of a human being.

A chill of terror went to Ralph's heart at the demand. The watch, a fine gold one, had been his father's, and the purse, a curious silk affair, was one his mother had used years before her death. Next to the Bible, brought by his father from England to be presented to his mother one Christmas, they were his most prized possessions. The thought of losing them was maddening.

"You won't get them," he cried. "You'll have to kill me first." And with that he set up a shout of "Help! help! I'm being robbed!" which went echoing through the street.

Happily at that moment the police patrol, which paid frequent visits at night to this unsavoury neighbourhood, came round a near corner, and hearing Ralph's cries, at once dashed to his rescue. They were just in time. The hands of the boy's assailant were at his throat, and in another moment he would have been throttled into silence and helplessness, when the flashing rays of bull's-eye lanterns lit up the archway, and, ere the ruffian could make his escape, the strong arms of the law had him fast.

"And now, young chap," said the police sergeant to Ralph, when the foiled scoundrel had been hand-

cuffed, "how come you here, I'd like to know? This isn't a healthy quarter of the city for honest folk."

Noting the suspicious tone of inquiry, Ralph, feeling so relieved that he would have liked to shout for joy, smiled reassuringly.

"I wasn't doing anything wrong, sir," he replied, and then he proceeded to explain just how it was that he had got into the dangerous predicament in which they found him.

The sergeant laughed in a good-humoured, patronising way.

"You need to have all the hay-seeds out of your hair before you come exploring these diggings," said he. "But I'm right glad we came along in time to get you out of your scrape, and you'll have to be more careful next time. One of my men will go along with you to where you're stopping." Thus escorted, Ralph was not long in reaching the hotel, which he felt as glad to see again as if it were his old home. Captain Sampson seemed greatly amused at his adventure when he related it the next morning.

"You had a narrow shave of it to be sure, my son," he said. "I've been in something the same kind of a fix myself more than once, and didn't always get out of it as well as you did either. I reckon you're of the lucky sort, Ralph; I hope

you are anyway, for there's no business that luck counts for more in than whaling, as you'll come to know on your own account."

Ralph had been taught to believe in Providence, rather than in luck. His mother had been wont to seek Divine direction in the smallest details of her life, and her son had grown up to a faith in the unfailing goodness of God that was the most precious inheritance she could have conferred upon him. But he had too much discretion to take issue with the Captain on the point, and the talk drifted off into other channels. That day they went down to New Bedford, then the most important centre of the whaling business in the world, at one of whose wharves Captain Sampson's ship was awaiting him.

Ralph's first impressions of New Bedford were such as he was not likely to forget. Having read all the books of travel that he could find in Hilldale, and listened to old Captain Bowline's yarns until he knew the most of them by heart, he had acquired a fair general knowledge of the world and its inhabitants, but he never expected to come upon so many representatives of its strange people as he found in the streets of the bustling New England seaport.

Walking along by Captain Sampson's side he was continually ejaculating: "What a queer-

looking chap ! where does he come from ? Oh ! just look at that man's face !" and so on.

Verily the ends of the earth seemed brought together on those New Bedford side-walks, where African negroes, Red Indians, Feejeeans, Erromangoans, Maoris, and even Eskimo, jostled one another or talked in strange, guttural tones, and with startling violence of gesture.

"See those two fellows across the way !" said the Captain, pointing to a couple of tall, brown-skinned men, who were conversing in a kind of pantomime. "What do you think of them ?"

Ralph regarded the individuals indicated curiously. They were of more than ordinary height, superbly built, and their faces would have been handsome but for the disfiguring tattoo which covered them like a network.

"Would you believe that they were cannibals, Ralph," continued Captain Sampson, "who've probably made more than one good meal of roast missionary ?"

Ralph looked from the men into the Captain's face, expecting to discover some twinkle of the eye, or twitching of the lips, that would betray him. But the veteran mariner's countenance was as serious as a minister's.

"You think I'm running a rig on you, my son," he responded. "But you're greatly mistaken.

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Those savages are from Erromanga, where 'long pig,' as they call human flesh, is highly appreciated, and those two chaps there have, no doubt, had their share of it before they took to whaling."

A queer feeling of nausea came over Ralph as he gazed at the men, and realised that they had indeed eaten of their own kind.

"Do they have such wretches on board the whaling-ships?" he asked, with a shade of apprehension in his tone.

Captain Sampson laughed at the inquiry.

"I rather reckon they do," he replied. "There's not a ship that hasn't some of them on its roll. We couldn't get along without them."

Ralph gave a slight shudder, but said nothing more, although in his mind he determined to give the cannibals as wide a berth as he possibly could, both on land and at sea. It was a welcome change to turn from the wild men of the Southern Seas to the sturdy, stalwart youths fresh from the farms and forests of New England, who, like himself, were new to everything about them, and for whom he had a fellow-feeling that tempted him to accost them, as he certainly would have done had he been alone.

"I hope there'll be plenty like them on board our ship," said Ralph to himself. "I'll get along all right with them, I'm sure."

There was more to be seen in New Bedford, however, than the people who thronged its streets. Besides its great warehouses extending up from the wharves, the City of the Whale, as it had a right to be called, was notable for the splendour of its private residences, and parks and gardens. These were all the more striking because of the sternness of the surrounding country, which was little better than a desert, except where beautified by the hand of man. Only great wealth could have made so charming a paradise in the midst of such a wilderness of rocks, and the fact spoke volumes for the success achieved by some, at least, in the perilous and precarious whale fishery.

"There's a fine place for you, my son," said Captain Sampson, pointing to a large, handsome house standing in the centre of extensive grounds, adorned with lawns and flower-beds, and overshadowed by lofty maples and chestnuts. "That all came out of the South Seas, every stick and stone of it. Do you see that railing running along the front? What are those things sticking up through it?"

Ralph regarded them carefully.

"They're some kind of spears, aren't they?" he replied, for that certainly was what they most resembled.

"Harpoons, my son, harpoons!" shouted the

Captain. "Old Kelson's not ashamed of the way he made his money. He just lets all the world know it by putting up that harpoon fence before his doors, and if I ever have his luck, I'll have a whale's jawbone for my gate-posts, see if I don't."

While gazing with admiring eyes upon the many tokens of wealth and luxury about him, Ralph wondered if it would be his lot to be so well rewarded. It was a long look-ahead to be sure, but some of the owners of these palaces and parks had no doubt started at the bottom, and why shouldn't he work his way up as well as they?

But of all the sights of New Bedford, the one that interested him most keenly was the ship which was to be his home for years to come, may be. She was lying at one of the long wharves that fringed the water-side, and the boy's heart beat tumultuously as he climbed over her bulwarks and stepped upon her quarter-deck. She was a barque of some four hundred tons, but a few years old, and with all her rigging and outfit in thoroughly good condition.

"There you are, my son!" exclaimed Captain Sampson, his eyes shining with pride and affection, as would a mother's when showing off her child. "There's a fine ship for you! Not a swifter, snugger, safer craft sails from New Bedford than the *Osprey*, take my word for it."

Ralph was quite ready to take the Captain's word for it without reserve. In the size of her hull, in the loftiness of her masts, and the bewildering maze of her rigging, and in all the multitudinous appointments of her deck, the *Osprey* fully realised his dreams. She was a ship quite after his own heart.

"She is just splendid, sir," he responded with a manifest sincerity that quite satisfied her commander. "She's the finest ship I've seen."

A gratified smile spread over the Captain's features.

"Right you are, my son!" he cried, giving Ralph an approving clap on the back that made him stagger. "She's a beauty, the *Osprey*, and I wouldn't swap her for any ship that sails out of New Bedford, or Nantucket either."

Having thus blown off his pride, so to speak, Captain Sampson forthwith proceeded to business, leaving Ralph to look about him, and amuse himself in any way he pleased for the present.

He found no difficulty in doing this. Everything around him was not only novel, but of entrancing interest. He looked up at the seemingly hopeless confusion of ropes of all sizes that ran from the bulwarks to the masts and from mast to mast, and wondered how long it would take him to learn the name of each, and the part

it played in the management of the sails. Going forward, he peered into the foc'sle, and thought it appeared very gloomy and uninviting.

"I hope that's not where I'll have to sleep," he said to himself, turning away with a shrug of repugnance. "I'd almost rather stay out on deck if it wasn't too cold." From the foc'sle he proceeded to the bow where the great anchors were stowed, and whence he looked back over the whole ship. An inspiring sense of pride and satisfaction filled his heart. At last, without doing violence to his mother's feelings, he had come to the realisation of his boyish longings. The way had been opened up for him through sorrow and loss, yet surely the hand of Providence might be recognised. Any way, it was an unspeakable comfort to him that, while his mother lived, he had not set his will against hers, nor troubled her tender heart by outspoken repinings at her wanting to keep him by her side.

The *Osprey* was almost ready for sea; Captain Sampson's mates, all three of whom had been with him for some time, having completely superintended the stowing away of the vast quantity of provisions and other stores necessary for a voyage that might continue for years.

Presently the crew began to put in their appearance, and Ralph scanned them with eager curiosity.

They were a strangely-mixed lot of men—Old England and New England, Scotland and Nova Scotia, Ireland and Virginia, each contributing their quota of sturdy, sunburnt men, ready for all the perils and hardships of the sperm-whale fisheries.

Nor were these all. Amongst them, and yet apart from them, were sundry savage-looking fellows, whose dark skins and coal-black hair told of the tropics.

"Cannibals!" muttered Ralph with a shiver of disgust; "and I was hoping that there wouldn't be any of them aboard. I'm sure I don't see why Captain Sampson couldn't get along without them." But it was not for him to say anything in protest, and that afternoon, the wind favouring, the *Osprey*, under a cloud of canvas, bowled out of New Bedford harbour, bound for the wonder-filled regions below the Equator.

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CHAPTER IV

IN PERIL ALOFT

As the noble ship clove her way through the white-caps of the harbour, moving almost as steadily as a railway train, Ralph standing in the bows with the fresh breeze ruffling his hair, and reddening his cheeks, felt like shouting aloud for very joy. This was what had been the desire of his heart as long as he could remember.

"Some day, if God spares me, I shall have a ship of my own," he soliloquised, "and then won't I be the proud man! And I won't have any savages in my crew either, if I can help it."

While the *Osprey* was still in New Bedford harbour she went smoothly along on an even keel, but when out into Buzzard's Bay, where the sea had room to make, she began to pitch and toss in a way that Ralph found rather disconcerting. A strange swimming of the head, combined with a nasty nausea in the stomach, such as he had never before experienced, took hold of him, and he was fain to seat himself upon a coil of rope, trusting that it would soon pass away.

But when from the waves of the Bay the *Osprey* pressed on under full sail to meet the billows of the Atlantic Ocean, instead of getting better Ralph found himself growing rapidly worse, until at last he had to entreat the assistance of a compassionate sailor to help him to his berth, where he lay prostrate, feeling as if death were certainly near at hand.

To his unspeakable relief Captain Sampson had not put him on the foc'sle, but assigned him a berth in a small cabin adjoining the main one, which was occupied by the carpenter and the blacksmith. He was thus not only spared being brought into close contact with the "cannibals," but he had for company two of the most respectable members of the crew, men whose companionship and conversation would not be likely to do him any harm.

Indeed it was for this very reason, and not with any thought of consulting his bodily comfort or personal preferences, that Captain Sampson had allotted him this quiet corner. The social atmosphere of the foc'sle could not be otherwise than both uncongenial and hurtful to a boy brought up as Ralph had been, and the longer he was spared exposure to it the better for him. The Captain made no pretence to being a religious man, but he had a hearty respect for genuine religion, and was

quite willing that Ralph should follow the example set him by his parents, without let or hindrance.

Ralph could not leave his berth for a couple of days, during which time he lay there in utter wretchedness, seeing no one save his two cabin-mates, and being looked after, in a rough sort of way, by the carpenter, who took pity on his helplessness. When he was able to crawl out on deck the *Osprey* had left the American continent far behind, and the various members of her crew had settled into their places, and taken up the routine that would last throughout the long voyage.

Captain Sampson, seeing him out, called him to the quarter-deck.

"Well, my son," he said, in a tone of genial encouragement. "Beginning to get your sea-legs on, eh? That's right. You'll soon feel as much at home on the *Osprey* as you did at Hilldale. And now I suppose you'd like to know what your duties are to be. The chief-mate will knock that into you." Then, raising his voice, he called out: "Mr. Houghton—a word with you."

A hearty "Ay-ay, sir," came from the stern taffrail, where the officer thus summoned was standing; and Ralph, not without anxiety, scrutinised the man into whose hands he was to be placed for instruction in seamanship. He beheld a medium-sized, middle-aged man, whose face,

framed in shaggy hair and beard, bore a curious expression of grimness, tempered by a twinkle of the eye, and a droop at the corner of the mouth, that betokened the faculty of being pleasant on occasion.

"Mr. Houghton, I put this lad into your watch for you to make a sailor of him," said the Captain, pushing Ralph a little forward; "give him plenty of work, and a taste of the rope's-end if he doesn't obey orders."

Captain Sampson gave a wink as he spoke of the rope's-end, which, of course, Ralph did not see, and the chief-mate responded with as serious an "Ay-ay, sir," as if his chief were in dead earnest.

Such was Ralph's introduction to the man upon whom, more than any one else, depended his happiness on board the *Osprey*. Mr. Houghton at once found something for him to do, and that day he had his first experience of going up into the rigging to help in working the sails.

He had not yet entirely recovered from his seasickness, and was rather weak from having eaten so little of late; but, when the command came to go into the maintop, he obeyed as promptly as if he felt equal to anything. Up he went, hand-over-hand, following in the rear of the other sailors until he reached the under side of the maintop.

Now the others had swung themselves up in

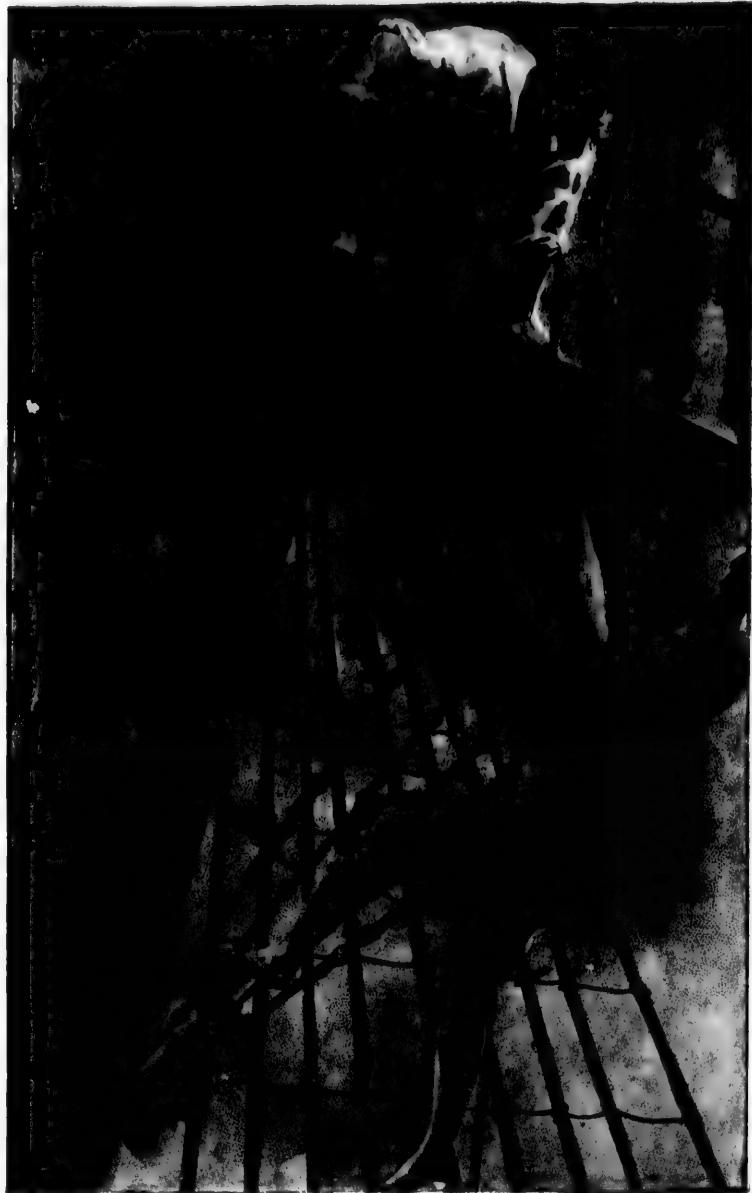
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RALPH'S FIRST VISIT TO THE MAINTOP.

the proper way by the futtock shrouds without a moment's hesitation, for they were all old hands; but when Ralph, still dizzy of head and weak of limb, looked up at the overhanging top, and realised that he must climb around it with his head slanting away out from his feet, his heart failed him, and he clung motionless to the shrouds.

"What are you about there, boy? Swarm up, swarm up, will you!"

It was the voice of the first-mate, vibrating with anger, and it made Ralph start like the sting of a whip-lash.

"Yes, sir; all right, sir," he murmured in reply, and making a desperate effort, he strove to ascend yet higher. But unfortunately his right foot lost its hold upon the rope-ladder, and, in trying to swing it back, his left also let go. At once his position became one of great peril, for he hung by his hands alone, unable to recover his footing, and certain of being dashed to death upon the deck if his grasp should fail. The first-mate saw his danger.

"Look out for that youngster by the maintop there," he shouted, pointing to where poor Ralph hung swaying with the pitching of the ship. "Quick now, or he'll drop."

The nearest sailor instantly sprang to the maintop, and, sliding down through the lubber's hole, he

reached out and caught Ralph, drawing him back into the shroud, so that he was able once more to get his feet upon the ropes. His help had come just in time : another moment, and Ralph's strength must have failed him, and he would have gone crash upon the hard deck forty feet below.

"Gimme your flipper here," growled the sailor, for he had no patience with such awkwardness, and when Ralph obeyed, he hauled him roughly towards him. "Get up the lubber's hole now, seeing you don't know any better." Too grateful for his rescue to feel any resentment at being thus rudely spoken to, Ralph crawled up through the hole in the maintop provided for such emergencies, and then lay down utterly breathless and exhausted.

The sailor, with a grunt of contempt, went back to his place in the yard, and Ralph, wondering how long it would take him to become so expert, watched the big square sail being clewed up according to Mr. Houghton's directions. When this had been done, and the sailors had returned to the deck, Ralph followed them in a very humble frame of mind. He had never imagined he would cut so poor a figure on his first appearance in the rigging, and he would gladly have slipped out of sight somewhere until the keenness of his humiliation might be in a manner dulled. But this was not

to be. As soon as he set foot on deck, the first-mate called him before him.

"Is that your style of work?" he asked with a satirical smile that made poor Ralph wince. "Do you know you came within an ace of having your neck broken? What sort of a sailor do you expect to make?"

To these cutting inquiries Ralph ventured no response. He might have pleaded that the seasickness had upset him for the moment, and that he would do better next time; but with drooping head and flaming cheeks he kept silence, and Mr. Houghton, evidently relenting, said in a more kindly tone: "You've got a good deal to learn, my lad, and the quicker you're about it the better it will be for you."

Thus dismissed, Ralph, inspired by a sudden resolution, went straight to the main-shrouds, and climbing to the futtock-shrouds, set himself with grim determination to the task of reaching the maintop in the proper fashion. His muscles quivered, his heart throbbed fiercely, and his breath came short as he leaned out over the great space below him; but, clenching his teeth, and ejaculating a brief "O God, help me to do it!" he made a supreme effort, and to his inexpressible relief, succeeded just when the slightest additional exertion seemed absolutely impossible. Secure upon

the maintop, he rested for some minutes, a glad sense of triumph filling his heart, and then he followed the shrouds with his eye to where they ended at the maintop-mast head.

"Shall I try that too?" he asked himself, half in doubt, half in challenge.

It was another twenty feet of a climb at least, and it looked as if the getting down again might be quite as difficult as the ascent. But his spirits rose with his returning strength. "I'll try it," he muttered. "It's not so bad as what I've just done."

Accordingly he set off, and, climbing cautiously, reached the head without great difficulty, holding on there for a minute to rest himself, and then returning to the maintop. When it came, however, to leaving the latter for the deck, he availed himself of the lubber's hole. The way by the futtock-shrouds seemed altogether too much of a good thing just then. "I'll try that next time," he soliloquised.

Now, in thus setting himself to conquer the difficulties of a sailor's work, he had not supposed that anybody, and least of all the chief-mate, would be observing him with interest. But to his surprise, Mr. Houghton called him up to him. "I see you've got the right stuff in you, my boy," said he, with a smile of approval. "That's the

way to learn the ropes ; you'll soon get the run of the rigging."

These kind words of encouragement revived Ralph's spirits, and made him forget all his miserable feelings, so that he was quite himself again. His appetite, too, came back to him, and he was able to manage his share of the salt beef and hard-tack, "ship's biscuit," which would be the staple fare of the *Osprey's* crew for many a month to come.

Having once got his sea-legs fairly, he went about the work assigned to him with a vigour that thoroughly pleased the first-mate.

"That lad takes after his father amazingly," he said to himself. "He's just cut out for the sea, and will have his own ship before he's thirty—if he can keep out of Davy Jones's locker meanwhile."

It was a good thing for Ralph that he had thus won his own way into Mr. Houghton's favour at the outset, for, having turned him over to the first-mate, Captain Sampson showed no further interest in him, and if Mr. Houghton had taken a dislike to the boy, it was in his power to give him a hard time of it.

As the days went by, and the *Osprey* pursued her course steadily towards the far-distant whaling ground, Ralph scraped acquaintance with the other members of the crew, for he was of a sociable disposition, and liked to be on easy terms with all about him.

No other vessel than a New Bedford whale-ship could show as strange a mixture of races and tongues, for although all the men spoke sufficient English to make themselves understood in that language, they lost no opportunity of using their own "lingo," whatever that might be.

Naturally he first made friends with those of his own race. But when he had come to know them all, his curiosity concerning the dusky contingent of the crew overbore his first repugnance, and he set himself to make their acquaintance also. There were a dozen in all—South Sea Islanders, Maoris, Indians, and Negroes—a motley group, which seemed to get along quite harmoniously, in spite of its curious composition.

Ralph was particularly attracted by one of the Erromangans, the harpooner of the first-mate's boat. He was certainly a magnificent specimen of humanity, standing six feet in height, and having a chest like the forefront of an ox, while his arms and legs were overlaid with great bands of muscle, that seemed as hard as the mahogany wood they closely resembled in colour.

In spite of believing that this giant had been guilty of cannibalism in the past, and was, perhaps, quite ready to repeat the horrid crime if occasion offered, Ralph could not help admiring the savage's handsome countenance and natural

dignity of carriage. As a matter of fact, Sakaio bore royal blood in his veins, and, had affairs gone well at home, would have been ruling over a good portion of his native island. But he had been worsted in one of the tribal wars constantly occurring, and his life being in imminent peril, had been glad to take refuge on board a whaling-ship that was refilling her water-casks in a sheltered cove.

Having once adopted a seafaring life, he liked it well enough to continue, and this was now his third voyage on a whaler. Being used to spear-throwing from boyhood, he naturally took up the harpoon, and became so expert in its use as to be claimed by Mr. Houghton for his own boat, and was therefore the chief harpooner of the *Osprey*. He could make himself understood fairly well in English, and was anxious to know the language better, believing that it would give him more power over his countrymen, to whom he intended to return ultimately, and regain his throne. This man fascinated Ralph in a way he could not explain to himself, and presently he felt impelled to make advances which the dusky native pleasantly reciprocated, and ere long they were on excellent terms.

At first Ralph had no thought of doing more than satisfying his own curiosity concerning this interesting man; but it chanced that one day,

after he had been some time in his company getting him to show how to throw the harpoon, there came into his mind a verse of the missionary hymn he had sung so often at home :

“ Shall we whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high—
Shall we to men benighted,
The lamp of life deny ? ”

Somehow the question took hold upon his heart and conscience, and refused to let go, for maybe never had any one troubled to speak to this savage of God and Christ ; indeed, he only knew the sacred names as he had heard them used profanely. Why should not he, Ralph, seize the opportunity of doing some missionary work ? The idea thrilled him strangely. It was so utterly novel, and yet was it not only the natural following out of what he had been taught in his own home ?

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CHAPTER V

A PROMISING PUPIL

ALTHOUGH Ralph's duty in regard to Sakaio became clear enough to him without his cogitating long upon the matter, some little time elapsed before his coming to a conclusion about it bore fruit in action. Naturally enough he felt very diffident about breaking the ice. To speak to any one on the subject of religion was something he had never done before, and just how to begin with an unlettered savage puzzled him sorely.

While he was struggling with this problem he had an adventure which came near costing him his life, and, at the same time, drew closer the bonds of friendship forming between Sakaio and himself.

Almost as soon as the *Osprey* had left the American continent out of sight astern, the mast-heads were manned, although there was not the slightest probability of sighting a sperm whale for the next month maybe. But such was the invariable custom of the whaling fleet. Once fairly out to sea, and, so long as there was a single cask

unfilled with oil, the mastheads would never be deserted from dawn till dark until the good ship had found her way back to the home port. This duty was taken by the sailors in turns, none being exempt save the mates, and the carpenter and blacksmith. Owing to his inexperience, Ralph was not called upon at first, but presently he was required to take his turn with the others.

Now, on board the sperm whalers, they are not so careful about the safety and comfort of the look-outs as they are on the ships that chase the Greenland or Right whale. There are no cosy crow's-nests provided, in which one may be almost as much at ease as in an arm-chair. Whether it is to insure greater vigilance, or because the captains do not want their masts disfigured by big black excrescences at the top, at all events there is no accommodation provided beyond the top-gallant cross-trees—two thin parallel sticks, upon which the sailor must perform squat or stand, keeping a good hold upon the nearest ropes.

Ralph's first experience of the masthead made an impression upon him that would not soon pass away. By the time his turn came around he had, to be sure, lost all nervousness in the rigging, and could do his fair share of work in letting out or furling a sail, and taking in a reef. But to be placed high aloft upon so insecure a perch, and

there to remain for two long hours, until every bone in his body seemed full of ache, that was something altogether new, and decidedly trying.

Yet there was something romantic and attractive about it too. In fine weather, with the good ship bowling along steadily over the blue waves touched with foam, this being nigh one hundred feet above the deck, and free from all duty save that of keeping your eyes about you, was not without its compensations. And then there was always the possibility of sighting the object of the vessel's search, the leviathan of the deep, alone or in groups, ploughing through the foaming brine, or sending a snowy spout high into the air.

No one on board the *Osprey* was more eager to report a whale than Ralph. He even remembered it in his prayers, and was so ready to go to the masthead that sometimes he took the turn of others who had not the same ardour.

One afternoon it fell to his turn to go up when there was every indication at hand of one of those sudden storms of frequent occurrence in the region through which the *Osprey* was passing. He did not ascend the mast with his wonted alacrity, for a strange sense of foreboding hung over him, and this time he would have been glad to exchange with some one else, could he have done so. But the rest of the crew were busy getting the ship

ready for the coming storm, and any way he would not have cared to ask one of them to take his place simply because he felt unaccountably nervous.

He had hardly reached the cross-trees before the oppressive stillness, which had prevailed for some minutes, was broken by a sharp puff or two of wind, and with a roar as of a great waterfall the storm burst upon the whale-ship. Happily, the *Osprey* was not caught napping. In obedience to Captain Sampson's stentorian commands, every sail had been clewed up securely, save a small storm-sail on each mast, and every yard braced to withstand the storm.

Yet even then, so furious was the blast that it bent her over until it seemed as if she must go upon her beam ends, and the swarthy faces of the sailors grew pallid with anxiety. Away up on the masthead, exposed to the full force of the storm, Ralph's position became one of great peril. He dared not move from his precarious perch, and yet to remain there seemed to court certain death; for although the good ship recovered from the first attack of the gale, and righted herself with a sudden spring that nearly flung him off into space, as a boy flings a potato ball from a pointed stick, there followed in quick succession other and still more violent blasts, that pressed her down until the water stood waist-deep in the lee-scuppers.

In the confusion and concern created by the gale, those at the mastheads were for a time quite forgotten by the rest of the crew, and it was not until Ralph had thrice narrowly escaped being hurled from his post into the seething waves, that Sakaio, glancing aloft, was aroused to a sense of the youth's extreme danger.

The savage had a generous heart, and, realising Ralph's helplessness, he at once went to his aid. No storm could make *him* falter in the rigging. He ascended the mast as swiftly and steadily as though the ship were moving in her ordinary way, and soon was just below Ralph, and calling out to him cheerily : "All right, me help you down; come along."

Relieved beyond expression, Ralph carefully let himself down from the cross-trees into the arms of Sakaio, and then the two descended to the deck together, where they were soon joined by the other two look-outs, who had with no small difficulty made their way down.

"You dear, good fellow!" Ralph exclaimed as soon as his feet touched the solid planks, that were so welcome after the swaying rigging, "you did me a good turn that time, and I can't tell you how much obliged to you I feel, but I'll do as much for you if I ever get the chance."

There was something ludicrous in the idea of a

stripling like Ralph ever being able to render a similar service to a giant like Sakaio, but he was perfectly sincere in what he said, and moreover it was in his power to show his gratitude in an even better way.

This incident naturally strengthened the bonds between the two. It also emboldened Ralph to put into execution the good intention concerning Sakaio, which had been taking form in his mind.

"Sakaio," said he one day, when the wind being fair, and every sail drawing beautifully, there was absolutely nothing for the men to do but loll about the shady side of the deck—"wouldn't you like to learn to read?"

The South Sea Islander opened his eyes, and laughed in his own soft, deep way, while he shook his head.

"Me read?" he replied. "No, no, me no can read. Nobody teach me how read."

"But I'll teach you, Sakaio," responded Ralph earnestly, "and when you go back to your own people, they'll think you a very wise man, and do whatever you tell them."

Sakaio still smiled and shook his head. He did not doubt the sincerity of Ralph's offer, but he did doubt his own ability to take advantage of it.

"Come now. We'll begin right off," continued

Ralph. "You stay here, and I'll go and get the book."

Returning presently with his Bible—a beautiful edition in fine, clear print—Ralph began the lesson.

They made a curiously-contrasted couple as they bent over the book together, the pupil so big and brown, and the teacher so slight and fair in comparison. But Ralph's earnestness communicated itself to the native, and it was not long before he gave himself up to the novel task with a zeal that was entirely satisfactory.

The teaching thus begun was continued through many months, for although Ralph found the work rather monotonous and wearisome at times, despite Sakaio's more than ordinary intelligence, yet he never dreamed of giving it up so long as he could retain the interest of his huge scholar. Of course, the two came in for plenty of ridicule. Ralph was promptly dubbed the "Dominie" by a would-be witty Scotchman, and Sakaio the "Dunce;" one fellow even went so far as to construct a dunce's cap out of paper, and drop it upon the South Sea Islander's head while he was bent over the printed page.

Happily Sakaio had no idea of the covert meaning of this investiture, which he tossed away with a good-humoured laugh, or else it might have gone

ill with the joker, for the big harpooneer was capable of appalling fits of anger when aroused.

The chief-mate, then, in a dignified way, let it be understood that the teaching had his approval, and that any attempt to interfere with it would be promptly punished.

Of course the lessons took a wider range than the mere understanding of letters and words. As Ralph had expected, Sakaio soor began to ask questions about God and Jesus Christ, and the many mysteries of the wonderful book. How to answer these questions often puzzled Ralph to the uttermost, and he longed for the presence of Mr. Stirling, who had been his pastor at Hilldale, in order that he might satisfy the innocent, yet profound, inquiries of the eager native. He did not attempt to go beyond the New Testament. It would be time enough, he reasoned, for Sakaio to take up the Old Testament when he could read it easily for himself, and would perhaps have at hand some one more competent to explain it than Ralph considered himself to be.

There was something so pathetic in the profound ignorance of Sakaio that Ralph often found his heart deeply touched, and it enabled him to understand, as he had never done before, the passionate appeals for missionary givings that he had heard year after year in the old church at home.

Not only so, but it awoke within his mind the thought whether the grandest work in life that one could do was not the missionary's. The question had no personal bearing at the time, but, like seed falling into good ground, it bore fruit in the future, as will be seen.

Meanwhile the *Osprey*, under easy sail, had been visiting different cruising grounds in quest of the great sperm whale. First to the Azores, where Ralph would have been glad to land for a brief run on shore, and the chance of climbing one of the mighty peaks that towered so high above the ocean. Then to the grounds of the Cape de Verdes, and back across the deep to those at the mouth of the Rio la Plata; returning again to the Carroll Ground, which lay south of St. Helena.

With increasing vigilance were the mastheads manned during the hours of daylight, and even after darkness had enfolded the ship the men on watch kept a keen look-out to port and starboard, lest a chance spout should reveal the nearness of their long-sought prey.

The weather had been wonderfully fine of late, one warm bright day succeeding another, and if it had not been for the constant tension of expectancy, those on board the *Osprey* would have been having a lazy time of it. Everybody was longing for the sight of a whale, and keen was the disappointment

as the whaling grounds were successively drawn blank, to borrow a term from another kind of hunting.

Naturally, too, the sultry atmosphere and the suave gentleness of the wind had a soporific effect upon the majority of the crew, and they were lolling about the bulwarks or lying upon coils of rope in the shade of the deck-house, when suddenly there came down from the throat of Sakaio, perched high aloft in the cross-trees, the eagerly-awaited cry of "There she blows! There she blows! There, and there, and there!" as with outstretched arm he pointed towards the horizon.

The immediate intensity of action, combined with perfect order, that ensued was a revelation to Ralph. He never imagined that men could move with such apparently reckless rapidity, and yet do exactly the right thing and in the right way. In quick response to Sakaio's welcome announcement, there had gone up to him the question, "Where away? where away?"

"Two miles off on the weather bow. One, two, three—many, many, many!" the harpooneer had shouted joyously; and then, with a cry of "There go flukes!" he fairly flung himself down the rigging, in his haste to reach the deck.

The time of the whales' vanishing beneath the surface was carefully noted, for the great creatures

came up to blow with the regularity of clock-work ; and then all hands stood ready for action the moment their long-sought prey should reappear.

Three boats swung out on their cranes prepared for instant lowering, their eager crews standing with one foot on the gunwale, while they clung to the rail with their hands. In the boats the line-tubs, harpoons, and lances were in their proper places, and everything awaited Captain Sampson's command to lower away.

Upon the rail, close beside the chief-mate's boat, Ralph balanced himself, thrilling with hope and uncertainty.

Would he be allowed to go in the boat ? With his whole heart he wanted to, but so far no place had been assigned him. As he held on there, with his eyes fixed upon Mr. Houghton, the Captain's command rang out : "Lower away there ! lower away, all ! "

CHAPTER VI

A SUCCESSFUL CHASE

THE moment the Captain spoke, the three crews, like one man, sprang out over the rail, the sheaves whirled round in the blocks with a sharp rattle, the boats dropped into the sea making a simultaneous splash, and with a dexterous daring not to be found in any other vocation, the sailors leaped down the side of the rolling ship into the tossing boats below. With them jumped Ralph. At the last moment he had succeeded in catching the chief-mate's eye. There could be no misunderstanding the look of earnest entreaty upon his face, and Mr. Houghton gave a quick nod, which meant assent.

"Spread out now, my men!" shouted Captain Sampson, who had not lowered his boat, reserving it for emergencies. "There she blows, right ahead of you—a whole school of them. Give way now, and see who'll be fast first."

The oarsmen, of which there were five in each boat, did "give way." To Ralph, crouched in the

stern of the chief-mate's boat, so as to be out of the way of the great steering-oar, the tremendous vigour they put into their work was a revelation. He had never seen anything like it in his life before, and he thought to himself that they surely could not continue such exertions any length of time.

Yet, if Mr. Houghton's language were to be taken literally, he was by no means content with their efforts, for he kept up a running fire of appeal, expostulation, and invective, that astonished Ralph, who never had imagined him capable of such excitement.

"Give way, my good fellows, give way! lift her now, lift her! Send her along! Don't go to sleep! Shake her! Shake! This isn't a funeral. Come now, no shirking your stroke, ~~you~~ sons of sea-dogs. That's it! Now you've got it, Ospreys! Keep it up! Lift her, lift her! make her snort. She'll stand it all right. Don't be afraid of hurrying her!" And so on, with increasing volubility, while the light, swift boat fairly tore through the water, and soon had a commanding lead over the other two.

In this manner a full mile had been traversed when, in response to a signal from Mr. Houghton, the five oars in his boat were suddenly peaked, and the men sat motionless in their seats. Instantly

the other boats did likewise, for the whales had unexpectedly settled down bodily in the breeze-ruffled water, leaving no sign of their immediate whereabouts, and their hunters must needs keep still until they should once more show themselves.

And now every man became a look-out, their eyes ranging the waves throughout the whole circle of vision as the boats rose and fell on the heaving bosom of the deep.

"Stand up, Sakaio," called out the chief-mate to his harpooneer, who, of course, pulled the bow-oar, and at once the giant native sprang upon the triangular box, raised level with the gunwale in the bow, where he stood poised, balancing himself with the ease of long practice, unheeding the motion of the boat.

Mr. Houghton at the same time planted himself upon the similar little platform at the stern, and the two men, thus securing as commanding a point of view as was possible, swept the vast foam-flecked blue about them with intensely eager eyes. For full five minutes there was no sign of the whales, and the suspense became well-nigh unendurable. Ralph, occupying the uncomfortable position that he did at the bottom of the boat, longed to stand up and stretch himself, but he did not dare to move when everybody else was motionless.

Suddenly the breathless silence was broken by the cry of Sakaio : "Down, down all, and give way. There they are !"

Ralph, rising on his knees, gazed eagerly in the direction the harpooneer indicated ere he grasped his oar, but he could see absolutely nothing to betray the proximity of the whale. Indeed, only the experienced eye of the veteran whaler could have recognised the sign, for it was nothing but a troubled bit of greenish-white water, with thin puffs of vapour hovering over it, and blowing off to leeward, while the air around vibrated as though tremulous with heat. Yet underneath this vibrating atmosphere, with only a thin layer of water covering their mighty backs, swam the whales, fleeing from their pursuers, whose presence they had now detected.

The three boats instantly set off in furious chase after that one troubled spot of water and air, the chief-mate's in the van, but the other two following close.

"Give it to her now, my hearties !" roared Mr. Houghton, swinging his great steering-oar from side to side so that it had a sculling motion, and thereby contributed its share to increasing the speed of the boat. "Lift her along ; that's the way. No time to pick your footsteps, I tell you. Break your backs and burst your lungs, if you will,

but lift her! lift her!" and so on, without seeming to ever pause for breath.

No one, indeed, would ever have recognised the dignified, slow-moving, first-officer of the *Osprey* in the shouting, stamping, frantic individual in the stern of the whale-boat.

As the afternoon had waned, the wind had risen, and the boats were now driving their way over rolling billows that tossed them on high like very chips. Ralph's heart swelled with strange emotions. It was certainly a most moving situation for one to whom it was all new and amazing.

The vast foam-crowned swells of the unbounded ocean, up whose heaving slopes the boats climbed laboriously, only to poise for an instant on the hissing edge, and then, with a leap that seemed at times to be through the very air, dived into the sullen hollow; the roar of the great seas as they surged past the gunwales of the daring little craft, the urgent exhortings of the chief-mate, and the multiplied pantings of the hard-driven oarsmen—these all contrived to fill Ralph with wonder and awe. The reality of whale-hunting far transcended his utmost imaginings, and he thought exultantly of the time when he should be in Mr. Houghton's place, if Providence permitted him to arrive at that dignity.

Owing to the gathering darkness, the jets of

vapours spouted by the whales became more clearly visible, and it was evident that the great creatures were no longer keeping together, but dividing into small bands. The boats, therefore, spread out, and Mr. Houghton's gave chase to a band of four big whales that were making off dead to leeward. The direction they took enabled the sail now to be brought into service, and it was hoisted without delay, adding so greatly to the speed of the boat that the oars became almost superfluous, although the men continued to work at them. On into the deepening dusk the light craft dashed with reckless speed, her crew losing all sight of the companion boats, or of the *Osprey*, as they sped forward in their furious chase.

The first exaltation of excitement having passed, Ralph began to have a better sense of the positive peril of the situation.

"Surely they won't keep this up much longer," he said to himself, not without apprehension. "It'll soon be pitch dark, and they won't be able to tell where they're going."

Indeed, although he would have been very reluctant to confess it, he heartily wished himself back upon the solid deck of the *Osprey*. There seemed small chance of that, however, so long as whales were within reach, and so he strove to steel his heart against the influences of terror.

The boat had rushed through the wild turmoil of water for the space of half a mile, or more, when the first-mate threw out his right arm towards the bow, and, in a sharp undertone, bid Sakaio "Stand up!" The big fellow instantly sprang to his feet, harpoon in hand, while the other rowers rested on their oars in tense expectancy.

"Now, then, give it to him!" cried the first-mate at the top of his voice, throwing himself forward as though he were some kind of a missile.

With a whirr like the sudden flight of a startled pigeon, the harpoon darted from Sakaio's mighty arm, and a peculiar soft thud told that the iron had gone home.

"Back all! back for your lives!" roared Mr. Houghton. "Strike sail!"

Bending to their oars, the men forced the boat backward, Sakaio at the same time taking down the sail; and the next moment the harpoon line began to run out with a rapidity that threatened its speedily reaching an end unless the stricken whale changed its course.

"He's sounding; take two turns around the bollard . . ." commanded the chief-mate, and the experienced Sakaio carried out the order.

Yet even with this check the line still ran out at such a rate that the friction, as it circled the stout bollard, made the latter smoke, and would

indeed have soon set it on fire did not Sakaio drench it thoroughly with water.

Now that they were really fast to a whale, Ralph's spirits revived, and in his eagerness for its capture he forgot all his apprehensions. There was something strangely exhilarating, too, however real the danger might be, in being thus drawn through the water at a tremendous speed by a great creature, the slightest stroke of whose flukes would have crushed the boat like an egg-shell, and smitten its occupants to death.

The spare line had to be spliced on, and it had nearly reached its end, so that Sakaio was standing ready with his hatchet to sever it lest the boat should be drawn under, when at last the wild rush of the wounded monster ceased. He was evidently coming up to the surface for breath, and as quickly as possible the line was drawn in and re-coiled in the tubs.

The crisis was now at hand. The chief-mate and Sakaio changed ends, and Ralph took the latter's place at the oar. He could not of course pull one-half so strong a stroke, but he could keep time and help a little. Putting every ounce of strength they possessed into their work, the rowers drove the boat towards the spot where the whale was expected to rise. Ralph was as wild as any of them now, and he strained every nerve and muscle in his body to do his share of the rowing.

"Steady there now! Steady all!" shouted the chief-mate; and the next moment, as the men waited on their oars, there rose out of the sea, not ten yards from the bow of the boat, a huge dark mass, from which shot up into the air a spout of white vapour stained with blood.

"Give way all! give way!" was the next order.

The men gave one mighty pull that sent the boat right up to the whale, and then Mr. Houghton, rising on tiptoe, and holding the long, keen lance in both hands, plunged it with all his might into the monster, just behind his side-fin.

It was a master stroke, such as only a veteran whalesman could have given, and the flashing steel went straight to the heart of the leviathan.

"Stern all! Stern all, for your lives!" shouted the first-mate, leaving the lance sticking in the wound, and dropping down into the bow so as to avoid the awful stroke of his victim's tail.

"Beware flukes! Stern all, I tell you!" he repeated.

The oars tore up the water as the men obeyed the order, and the boat went backwards twenty yards.

The retreat was made not a moment too soon. Wounded to death, the whale smote right and left with his irresistible tail, evidently seeking for his

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enemies, and had they been within reach of his stroke, terrible would have been the consequences.

Happily, they were just outside the circle of his fury; and although the boat was tossed up and down, as if it were no less alive than the whale, the men all kept their places until the flurry was over, and the chief-mate's exultant shout announced the death of their huge victim.

Now came the question of regaining the ship. By this time it was so dark that the keenest-sighted could not see beyond a hundred yards, and there was absolutely nothing to indicate the whereabouts of the *Osprey*. Yet Mr. Houghton seemed not a whit dismayed.

The wind had gone down again, and the sea was rapidly calming. The prospects for a fine night were excellent. If necessary, the boat would stay by its prize until morning. Accordingly a lantern was hoisted on a waif-pole, to attract the attention of the masthead look-out on the ship, and then the men settled themselves down to wait, no one knew how long.

Captain Sampson looked well after his crew at all times, and it was one of his rules that every boat should carry a keg of water, and a good bag of biscuit, in readiness for just such an emergency as the present.

"Get out the biscuit and water, Sakaio," said

Mr. Houghton ; and presently all were munching busily, for their supper-time had long gone past, and they had keen appetites.

When their appetites were appeased they lit their pipes, and stretched out upon their seats as comfortably as they could, seeming just as much at ease as if they were lounging upon the *Osprey's* deck.

Ralph, to whom everything was so novel, could not help marvelling at their cool unconcern. The situation was so strange a one, that they might surely have been expected to be somewhat affected by it. The apparent loneliness of the little boat in the vast world of darkness, lit only by the feeble rays of a single lantern ; the huge black bulk of the dead whale rolling from side to side, with soft splashing, as the waves gently moved it ; the subdued talk of the men, whose usually gruff voices had taken on a gentler tone for the time ; and the silence of the chief-mate and Sakaio, who both seemed wrapped in profound contemplation—these all made an impression upon Ralph that never passed from his mind, and he counted that night-watch beside the dead whale one of the strangest experiences of his life.

He was able to make himself pretty comfortable in the bottom of the boat, at Mr. Houghton's feet, and, as the night wore on, the weariness consequent

upon the long strain overcame all sense of strangeness, and he fell sound asleep. It was an hour later when he was awakened by the shouting of the men, the flapping of sails, and the rattle of blocks.

Thanks to the lantern on the waif-pole, the *Osprey* had found them, and their vigil was over.

With much glad shouting, and rough, good-humoured chaffing—for neither of the other two boats had had similar luck—Mr. Houghton's crew secured their prize to the side of the ship and then tumbled on board, highly pleased with themselves, as well indeed they might be, for their catch was a splendid bull-whale, good for many score barrels of precious oil and spermaceti.

Ralph quite naturally shared in their exultation. His contribution to the successful result may have been very small, to be sure, but he was exceedingly glad that he had been permitted to hold an oar, if only for a short time. Before long he would take his full share of work with the others, and, in the meantime, he would lose no opportunity of making himself useful to the extent of his ability. It made him very happy when Sakaio said to him, with an air of lordly patronage—

" You row fine, Ralph. You make good man for boat. Me teach you how to throw harpoon, some day."

CHAPTER VII

OVERCOME BY TEMPTATION

AT the break of dawn work on the whale began, and the noise attendant upon preparing for the operation of flensing the inanimate monster was something prodigious. With heavy chains the great body had been secured by the head to the stern, and by the tail to the bow of the *Osprey*. The enormous cutting tackles, a huge bunch of blocks that two men could hardly lift, were swayed up to the maintop, and firmly lashed to the lower masthead, and a small hawser having been reeved through them and a lower block, equally large, the big blubber hook was attached to the latter, and hung directly over the whale.

Balanced upon small stages suspended over the ship's side, the second and third mates now cut a deep hole in the whale's body, just above the nearest side-fin. Into this hole the nearest blubber hook was thrust, and then all of the crew not otherwise employed went to the windlass, to which the other end of the hoisting hawser had been engaged.

Ralph took his place at the handle bars with the rest, while, with strident shouting and concentrated energy, they commenced heaving-in the hawser.

The effect on the ship was instant and startling. She careened over upon the whale, as though she were about to roll it clear under. Strange groans and creakings came from her, and she seemed to tremble in every plank. More and more she leaned over towards the whale, until Ralph, to whom it was all so novel, felt a thrill of apprehension, although he did not abate his energy at the windlass.

Shouting still louder the more sharply the deck inclined, the toiling men bore upon the windlass until at last there came a sudden, sharp snap: with a great swash the ship rolled upwards and backwards from the whale, and the huge hook came into sight, having good hold upon the first strip of blubber. The men hailed its appearance with a triumphant shout, but did not slacken their exertions at the windlass, for, as the blubber surrounds the whale just as the yellow rind does an orange, so was it to be stripped off, as one would skin an orange, in one long spiral strip.

By keeping up the strain upon the tackle, the whale was rolled round and round in the water, the two mates, from their stages, swiftly cutting

with razor-edged whaling spades a line called the "scarf," that regulated the width of the blubber strip.

Higher and higher rose the hideous-looking mass of blubber and blood, until the hook reached the upper block. Not before then did the workers at the windlass cease heaving.

Now Sakaio stepped forward, holding in his hand a long keen weapon known as the boarding-sword, wherewith, watching his chance as the reeking mass swayed to and fro, he cut a big hole in the lower part of it. Into this hole a second hook was secured, and then the harpooneer, after warning all hands to stand off, slashed fiercely with his sword at the blubber strip until it was severed in twain, and the long upper part, called the blanket-piece, swung clear from the other, and was all ready for lowering. This blanket-piece was then lowered down through the main-hatchway into the blubber room, where some of the crew were ready to receive it, and to stow it away for the present.

In this way the work went on without cessation of vigour or noise, one tackle tearing off the great strips, and the other lowering them into the blubber room, while the ship rolled and groaned, the blocks rattled, the men shouted their rude "chanties," and everybody was bespattered with blood, until the *Osprey's* deck looked like a shambles.

Ralph had never in his life been in such a mess, and, at first, he was in danger of being overcome with nausea, but he managed to control his qualms, and to keep at the windlass until the cutting-in was at last completed, and there came a respite from the repulsive task. He immediately hastened to his cabin to change his clothes, and to cleanse himself of the blood and grease with which he was so plentifully bespattered.

Returning to the deck, he was soon absorbed in watching the strange spectacle alongside, to which he had not hitherto been able to give attention. Attracted by the prospect of a feast such as they could never obtain by their own efforts, a great number of sharks had put in an appearance, and fairly made the water boil by their ceaseless movements, as they shoved and jostled one another about the body of the whale.

They made a hideous company, and the sailors, who hold towards them an undying hatred, and lose no opportunity of wreaking their destruction, as soon as their hands were free from the task of flensing, entered with great vigour into a shark-killing contest.

The horrid creatures were utterly reckless in their hunger for the rich, juicy meat of the whale, following the strips of blubber as they were unrolled, and snapping at them so that the crack

of their jagged teeth sounded like the rattle of castanets.

In snatching at the whale meat they, of course, turned over on their backs, and this movement gave the sailors their chance. Armed with long lances or whaling spades, they dealt fierce thrusts at the sharks' stomachs, sometimes piercing them to the heart, or, perhaps, cutting a great gash, through which the entrails would protrude.

Yet, fearful as the slaughter was, it had no restraining effect upon the savage sea-wolves. The survivors not only pressed forward as furiously for their share of the feast, but even snapped at one another, gobbling up the entrails of their wounded brethren with as great gusto as if that were their favourite food.

Ralph took no part in the massacre, although his hereditary antipathy to the shark caused him to look upon it with approval, and he was leaning over the bulwarks watching the proceedings intently, when suddenly he was unpleasantly interrupted by receiving a big, bloody piece of blubber full in the face.

To understand the situation it will be necessary to hark back a bit in this story.

One member of the crew to whom Ralph had taken a positive dislike from the very first was the cabin-boy, on whom, in allusion to his duties as

waiter at the Captain's table, the sailors had conferred the name of "Soupey." His appearance certainly was not calculated to make a pleasant impression, for he was lean of figure, thin and sallow of face, had lank black hair, and a pair of black shifting crafty eyes whose glances could not fail to inspire distrust.

Were these personal characteristics all that repelled Ralph, he might have got used to them, but what made Soupey obnoxious in a way there was no getting over was his foul talk. He was a child of the streets who had taken to the sea. His early surroundings had been as demoralising as Ralph's had been uplifting, and he could hardly open his mouth without an oath, while he delighted in impure allusions and unclean stories that made Ralph's cheeks burn with indignation.

Of course he soon observed Ralph's repugnance, and repaid it by seizing every chance to annoy and provoke him. He nicknamed him "Sugar-mouth" as an offset to his own sobriquet of "Soupey," and was never weary of trying to make Ralph angry, in the hope of tempting him to swear or do something equally discreditable. In this he was tacitly if not openly encouraged by many of the crew, who, although they could not help respecting Ralph's way of life, yet resented it somewhat, because they thought he set himself up to be better than the rest.

"He wants taking down a peg;" "He carries his head too high, he does;" "He's too stiff-starched, and needs to be limbered out a little," and similar remarks were passed about him, without of course their ever reaching his ears.

Now on more than one occasion he had been sorely tempted to thrash Soupey for his aggravating impertinences, but so far had succeeded in controlling himself, being helped thereto by the conviction that a fight between him and his tormentor would be just what the men would like to witness.

When, however, the reeking slice of blubber smote him in the face, smearing him from brow to chin, and spotting the clean shirt he had just put on, all of the devil there was in Ralph came to the surface. Instinctively he guessed who was the aggressor, and whirling about, glared furiously in the direction whence the horrid missile had come. But he could see no sign of Soupey, although several of the sailors standing about were regarding him with a twinkle of the eye that showed they knew more than they would tell.

"Who threw that at me?" cried Ralph, darting angry glances to right and left. "I'm sure it was Soupey. Where is he?"

The men laughed knowingly, but did not answer, and Ralph was about to institute a search of the

deck, when Sakaio, who was aloft and had seen the whole proceeding from there, called out—

"Soupey throw that at you, Ralph ; you give him big licking. He in there," and he pointed to the place in the bows where the anchors and chains were stowed.

Ralph instantly sprang thither, and almost fell over Soupey, who was crouching behind a big coil of hawser.

"What did you do that for ?" he cried, seizing him by the collar of his shirt with his left hand, while he struck at him with his right hand clenched. "You miserable sneak, I'm not going to put up with any more of your tormenting."

At first Soupey made no resistance, but after receiving several heavy thumps, his temper was roused, and he hit back vigorously, so that, instead of simply administering a well-deserved thrashing, Ralph presently found himself in the thick of a rough-and-ready fight.

He was somewhat taller and stronger than Soupey, and under ordinary circumstances there could be little doubt about the issue of the conflict ; but in that confined and littered space he was at a great disadvantage in a struggle with an opponent who used his feet, his teeth, and his nails in utter disregard of the rules of fair fighting. Indeed Ralph was like to get the worst of it unless he re-

sorted to the same unworthy tactics, when, by a trick of wrestling learned at home, he threw the other backward and fell over upon him.

The fall was a heavy one, but Soupey would have stood it right enough had not the back of his head come in contact with a ring-bolt in the deck, and so cruel was the blow that it drove him into insensibility. To Ralph's horror, he lay there limp, and apparently lifeless; and, as the former was for a moment gazing at him, appalled at what he had done, who should come up but Captain Sampson!

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, eyeing Ralph with a look of stern disapproval. "What's all this about? Is this your doing, sir?"

Ralph hung his head in silence. He was keenly conscious of how all appearances must be against him, and also of the strange figure he must present, with the smears of the blubber on his face, and his clothes in disorder from the fierce struggle.

"Throw some water in that boy's face. He's only stunned. He'll be all right in a moment," commanded Captain Sampson, and a couple of sailors hastened to obey.

Then turning to Ralph he said gruffly: "Go and clean up, and then come to my cabin."

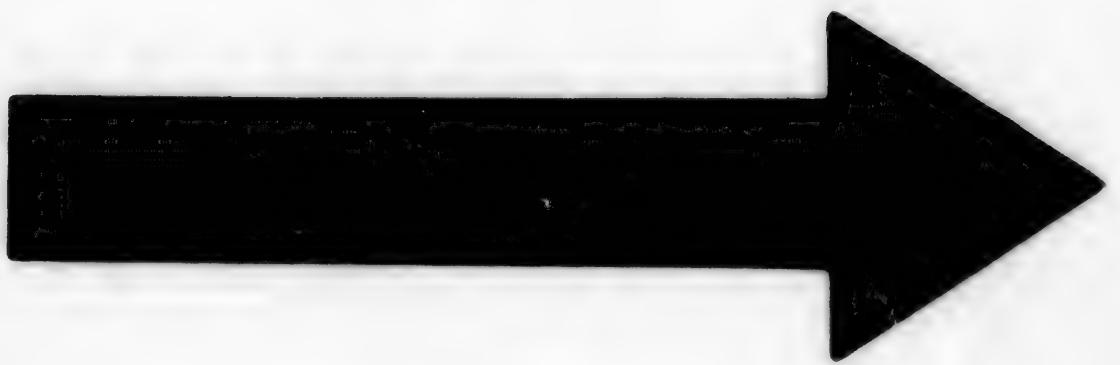
A few minutes later Ralph presented himself in the cabin, in about as miserable a state of mind as

he had ever experienced in his life. He did not, indeed, so much dread the Captain's condemnation—for he felt sure his sense of justice would show him how great had been the provocation—as he felt utterly ashamed of himself for having so given way to violent anger.

"Now, sir, what have you to say for yourself?" demanded the Captain, who, in truth, was very much ~~surprised~~, as he had quite a liking for Soupey, who always took pains to serve him assiduously.

As best he could, Ralph stated his side of the matter, explaining how long Soupey had been tormenting him, although, of course, he said nothing as to what he imagined might be the ground of the boy's animosity. He then asked that Sakaio might be sent for, as he had been a witness of Soupey's provocation. Captain Sampson assented to this, and, in questioning the harpooneer, evidently felt disposed to take a more lenient view of Ralph's conduct.

"You certainly had good reason to be riled, I can see," he said, "but it would have been more to your credit if you hadn't let your temper get the better of you, as you did. I'll give that young rascal an overhauling that'll make him behave a good deal better in future, I promise you."



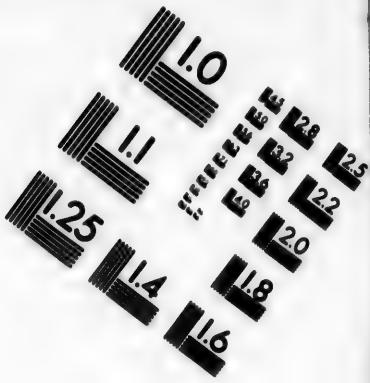
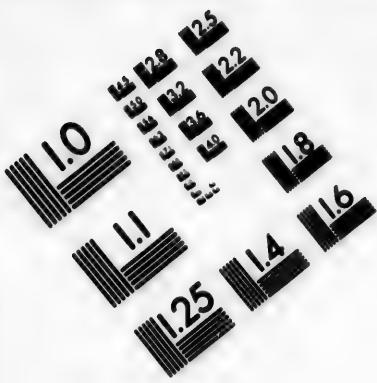
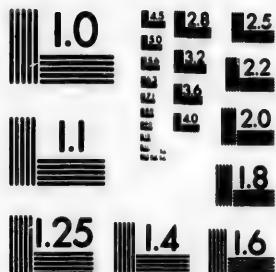
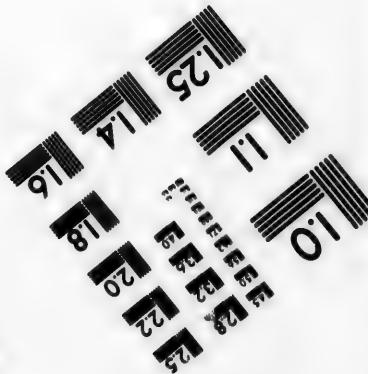
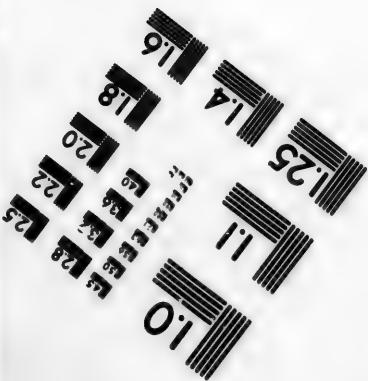


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He then dismissed Ralph, who hied himself up to the main-truck, where, secure from all observation and intrusion, he could be alone until the tumult of emotions within him had somewhat subsided.

He felt utterly disgraced, not only in his own eyes, but in those of his shipmates. What would they think of him now? They had all chaffed him more or less because he would not swear as they did, or relish impure jokes, or enjoy a nip of grog; yet he had reason to believe that they entertained a measure of respect for him notwithstanding.

But his sorry exhibition of temper would effectually banish that, and, at the same time, bar him from exercising the influence for good that he hoped to do through his example, and then, beyond this, there was the sense of Divine disapproval, of which he was keenly conscious.

Altogether the poor youth was in a really pitiable state of mind, and when Sakaio's big brown face rose slowly on the edge of the truck, its owner being anxious to show his sympathy, yet doubtful as to whether his offering it would be well received, Ralph's first impulse was to throw his arms around the harpooneer's neck and hug him heartily, out of sheer gratitude.

"Cheer up, Ralph!" said Sakaio. "You're all

right. Don't mind Soupey. He very bad boy. You good man;" and thus in his rude but sincere way the honest fellow strove to comfort his friend, and not ineffectually either.

As they communed together in the main-truck, Ralph, thus assured that he had not forfeited the respect of the South Sea Islander, grew easier of mind, and when they returned to the deck he was quite himself again.

One of the first he met was Soupey, looking a little pallid of countenance, but otherwise none the worse apparently for his fall. Ralph did not hesitate a moment in doing what his heart prompted to do. Advancing with outstretched hand to the boy, who at first shrank back as though he feared another blow, he said in his pleasantest way: "I want you to forgive me, Andy," calling him by his right name, and not his nickname, "and I hope you're all right again. I had no business to get into such a fury, even if you did rile me, and I'd like to be friends with you, just as if nothing had happened."

Taken completely by surprise—for such magnanimous conduct was utterly novel to him—Soupey hung his head and kept his hands behind his back, not saying a word.

"Give him your flipper, you lubber," cried one

of the men who was standing by, and warmly approved of Ralph's action. "Give him your flipper, d'ye hear?"

Thus adjured, Soupey put forward his hand in a limp, reluctant fashion, and let Ralph do all the shaking, still saying nothing. As soon as his hand was released he slunk off, evidently feeling very ill at ease.

"He's nothing better than a sculpin'!" said the sailor, with profound contempt. "Don't you bother any more about him."

Ralph, however, had no idea of taking this advice, as he had quite made up his mind to try and get on good terms with Soupey, for he disliked being at enmity with anybody.

The operation of cutting-in being completed, and the huge head of the whale having been cleverly severed from the body and dropped astern for further treatment, the great carcass was now let adrift.

It presented a strange sight as it slowly floated away. Once black as ink, the removal of the skin had made it white as marble, save where splotched with blood. The screaming sea-birds and the ravenous sharks now had it all to themselves, and in incredible numbers they thronged to the bountiful banquet, filling the air with the beating of their wings, and making the water foam as they jostled

and shoved and snapped in seemingly insatiable greed.

"Poor old whale!" soliloquised Ralph, as he watched the mournful spectacle. "You little thought you'd ever come to that, did you?"

CHAPTER VIII

A TIMELY SERVICE

VALUABLE as the blubber might be, holding its good fourscore barrels of oil, there was another part of the whale of even more consequence ; this was the head, to which the workers now gave their attention. As soon as the carcass had been done with, the gigantic head, constituting nearly one-third of the Leviathan's bulk, and weighing many tons, was brought up alongside and hoisted about half its length out of water, where it kept the ship leaning over at a sharp angle.

The business next in order was to get the precious spermaceti, hidden away in what was called the "case," which embraced the entire length of the top of the head, a vast receptacle some twenty-five feet in depth when the head was hoisted up, and full to the brim of the most valuable of all the monster's products.

It was Sakaio's duty to tap the case, a difficult and delicate operation at any time, but now especially so, as the sea had risen, and the *Osprey* was

rising and falling on the waves in a way calculated to disconcert the sturdiest veteran at the task. But the stalwart native went about the business as though it were an every-day affair, while Ralph watched his every movement with feelings about equally compounded of admiration and anxiety.

Mounting to the main-yard, the harpooneer walked out upon it until he stood just above the whale's suspended head. He had taken with him a light tackle, called a "whip," and securing the block to the end of the yard-arm, he dropped one end of the long rope rove through it to the deck, where it was belayed. Then hand over hand he slid down the other part of the rope until he had landed on the whale's snout so to speak, where, a short-handled sharp spade having been sent up to him, he proceeded to hunt for the right spot to dig. After carefully tapping and prodding here and there, he presently hit upon the proper place, and then set to work with such vigour that soon a great gaping hole was made in the tough structure.

"Ahoy there!" he cried, proudly straightening himself up. "Send along the bucket."

A heavy bucket was accordingly attached to the rope, and hoisted within his reach. At the same time, he was handed up a long thin pole. By the aid of the latter he pushed the bucket into the hole in the whale's head, far out of sight.

"Give way now," was his next command, and a couple of sailors hauled hard on the other end of the rope. Up came the bucket filled to overflowing with something as white as snow, and frothing richly like new milk.

"Easy now, my hearties!" called out the chief-mate warningly, as the brimming bucket was lowered gently down to be emptied into a large tub.

The operation is one of extreme interest, and was watched by the entire crew so far as their other duties would permit. Ralph, in order to get a commanding view, had perched himself upon the bulwarks astern of the whale's head, and everything was going merrily in spite of the high wind, when somehow Sakaio, while changing his position in order to work to better advantage, lost his footing, and the next minute, with a wild cry of alarm, plunged headlong into the sea.

"About ship there!" roared Captain Sampson to the helmsman. "Aloft with you and back the yard-arms!" he commanded the sailors, and with instant promptness they sprang to obey. But prompt as they were, it might have fared ill with poor Sakaio in that high sea, and with a legion of ravenous sharks all about him, had not Ralph's quick wit done him good service.

At either side of the stern hung a life-buoy that would drop simply by pulling a small bolt. Captain

Sampson was very particular about these buoys, and saw that they were always kept in readiness for immediate action, and Ralph had several times been detailed to overhaul them, and make sure that they were all right, and that the bolt was working easily. "I wonder when we'll have to use one of them," he had often said to himself as he was rubbing the rust of the metal-work. "I'd like to be the one to let it go."

Sakaio's peril now gave him the wished-for opportunity, and he was not slow to seize it. Springing to the quarter-deck he pulled the bolt, and the life-buoy, dropping with a splash into the water, went bobbing astern, showing plainly above the waves.

"Look, Sakaio!" Ralph screamed with all his might as he stood on the stern taffrail, and pointed to the life-buoy, "there's the life-buoy!"

The wind blew his words down to the harpooneer, who was stoutly buffeting the billows, still keeping hold of the long pole with which he had been shoving the bucket into the case, and lifting his head he caught sight of the welcome assistance. He now let the pole go and made his way towards the buoy, which, to Ralph's unspeakable relief, he safely reached. Thenceforth his only danger was from the sharks. To defend himself from these he drew his sheath-knife, and holding on to the buoy with his left hand, struck fiercely at their snouts

with his right whenever they came too near him.

"O God, protect Sakaio, and don't let the sharks do him any harm!" Ralph prayed earnestly, clasping his hands and lifting his eyes to heaven. There came into his mind at that moment the beautiful words, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms," which had been a favourite text of his mother's, and they gave him comfort as to his friend.

In the meantime the ship had been brought to a standstill, and one of the boats had been lowered and was pulling towards Sakaio as furiously as if he were a hundred-barrel whale. In a few minutes it was beside him, and just as he was being lifted over the gunwale a huge shark, whose efforts to bite him he had already foiled more than once, giving the horrid creature several sharp stabs in return, made a desperate rush at him, and succeeded in closing his teeth over his right foot.

Happily Sakaio had on a long boot, whose thick well-seasoned leather was not to be penetrated at once even by a shark's teeth. Desperately he kicked and struggled, while the men in the boat smote the shark with the blades of their oars. For a harrowing minute the issue seemed doubtful, and then with a final fierce struggle, Sakaio succeeded in wrenching his foot out of the boot and tumbling

over the gunwale uninjured, while the foiled monster, with a vicious flap of its tail, vanished with the boot still in its mouth. The incident created a great deal of excitement on board the ship, which did not subside until Sakaio was safe on deck again and Captain Sampson had ordered the men back to work.

One of the other harpooneers now took Sakaio's place on the whale's head, and the emptying of the case went on steadily until all the beautiful precious spermaceti had been taken out and placed in big tubs, to await another operation before it could be stored away for good.

In this operation Ralph took part, and, while everything else in connection with the flensing had been more or less repulsive, he found the working with the spermaceti very pleasant, and did not care how much there was of it.

When this strange material—the true reason for which in the whale's head has never been determined—had stood for a while in the tubs, it gathered itself together in lumps which required to be squeezed back again into fluid form. There was only one way to do this, namely, with human fingers, and so a number of the crew were detailed for the duty. Seated or kneeling at the tubs, they fished out the white unctuous lumps, much resembling thickly-clotted cream, and pressed them be-

tween their hands until they were once more like milk.

The spermaceti had an exquisite perfume; it felt indescribably smooth and luscious to the touch; it was beautiful in appearance; the work was the perfection of easiness; and so all day long, in the shade of the main-mast, moving his tub about as the *Osprey* changed her position in regard to the sun, Ralph squeezed and squeezed until his hands got so saturated with the perfumed oil that they seemed to lose all their stiffness, and become like india-rubber.

"I like this; don't you?" he said to the sailor who sat with him at the same tub. "It's more like play than work, and the stuff feels so nice in your hands. The poor whale! I wonder what he would think of us if he could see us now, making so free with the contents of his head."

Although he looked upon whaling as the probable business of his life, Ralph could not help feeling a great deal of sympathy for the huge creature that was the object of their chase. He was not handsome, it is true. There were few of the lines of beauty in his form, and his features certainly lacked every element of symmetry, while his colour had nothing to recommend it. But he seemed so big and powerful, so regal in his mastery over the ocean, and so hearty in his enjoyment of life, now

sending his whole vast bulk clear out of the water, and falling back with a tremendous splash, "breaching," as it is called, evidently for the pure fun of the thing; or again smiting the waves with swift successive strokes with his mighty flukes, until he lay in a smother of foam—"lob-tailing," the whalers' name for it—and then shooting up spout after spout from his blow-hole, apparently in just the same spirit as the exuberant school-boy who makes the welkin ring with piercing calls; these and other traits appealed so to Ralph's admiration that throughout all the days of his life afloat he never saw a whale in the final flurry without some qualms of misgiving.

After the capture and stowing away of the first whale, a whole fortnight passed without another being secured, although several were sighted from the masthead, and twice the boats were lowered in pursuit. This interval was devoted to trying-out the blubber, a most disagreeable process, which smothered the ship in soot, and kept the atmosphere foul with abominable smells.

Happily neither Sakaio nor Ralph were called upon to do much of this unpleasant work, and they seized the opportunity to continue the reading-lessons. The harpooneer really got on remarkably well, and the best of it was that, instead of his interest waning, it grew stronger as he progressed.

"You'll be able to read the book right through some day, Sakaio," Ralph told him, "and then you can read other books, and you'll get to know more than any man on your island ever did."

The South Sea Islander grinned expansively, and clapped his hands together in a way that betokened his pleasure at the praise bestowed. "Me be great man then," he said. "Me big chief, and have plenty warriors to fight, eh! They all do just what I say, because I so wise."

Ralph could not help smiling at the big fellow's earnestness, but he felt bound to discourage him in his idea of using his acquired knowledge solely for the purpose of advancing his own fortunes. There was a far higher use than that to which it could be put.

"But if you go back to your own people and be their chief," he said, "wouldn't you like to teach them to read too, and then you would all be wise?"

Sakaio shook his head most emphatically. "No, no, no!" he fairly shouted. "No one must be wise but me, then they all do just what I tell them."

Ralph smiled at the Erromangan's frank selfishness. He evidently had no idea of using his new knowledge for the benefit of his fellows, but solely for the purpose of advancing his own interests.

"O Sakaio!" said he, shaking his finger at him

reprovingly, "you'll never make a missionary if you look at things in that way. You ought to be glad, if you go back to your own people, to be able to teach them how to read the good book, and to learn the way to heaven. Just think of the men that go ever so many thousand miles in order to tell the poor heathen about God, and you could do that better than they could, because you know the language of your people already, while they have to learn it, which takes them a long time."

Sakaio, however, although he listened attentively enough, was not at the time to be convinced by this reasoning. Philanthropy had no part in his life plan as yet. He sought nothing save his own aggrandisement, and for this he was willing to work and wait with a tenacity of purpose very rare in the savage nature.

Ralph, on the other hand, grew more and more determined to get him to understand and to accept the principles of Christianity. As regards Sakaio he was inspired with true missionary fervour, and the stronger his affection for the big harpooneer grew, the keener was his desire to win him to the truth.

When the dirty, disagreeable business of trying-out the blubber had been completed, and the valuable oil that resulted was safely stowed away beneath the hatches in casks, all hands turned to, to clean ship, and in a surprisingly short space of

time the *Osprey* looked as fresh and bright and trim as if no whale had been disposed of. Everybody rejoiced when it was accomplished, and Ralph hoped that they would not capture another whale very soon, so that they might enjoy the delightful cleanliness for a season.

Sakaio now fulfilled his promise to teach him how to throw the harpoon, and with an old blunted iron for a weapon, and a cask for a target, Ralph practised diligently, much to the amusement of the other members of the crew, who thought he was in a great hurry to learn, seeing that there was small chance of his exercising his skill in the regular way for some years to come.

"Are you going in for that so as to take Sakaio's place if he gets sick, or anything?" one of the sailors inquired, with a countenance and tone of such apparent sincerity that Ralph, taken off his guard, hastened to answer—

"Oh no, Alec; I'm doing this just for fun. It's a good thing to know, and then some day it might come in handy."

The roar of laughter that greeted his innocent reply showed that he had been trapped. He flushed to the roots of his hair, and a sharp retort was on the tip of his tongue, but he wisely kept it back, and went on with his practice, refusing to be drawn out again.

He had to stand a good deal of chaff on board the *Osprey*. As already indicated, while the sailors for the most part both liked and respected him, still they could not fail to be conscious of his superiority to them in education and character. Indeed, had there been anything of the prig in his make-up, he would have had rather a hard time of it, for they would have tormented him unmercifully. Happily, however, this was not one of his defects; and, by being thoroughly natural and free from undue self-conceit, he got along far better than he otherwise would have done.

The *Osprey* had now hunted pretty well all over the whaling-grounds on the east side of the American continent, and her course was shaped for the Cape of Good Hope, the circumnavigation of which the stoutest-hearted sailor always anticipates with a certain fluttering of heart, in spite of its fine-sounding name.

For weeks past the weather had been pleasant, only occasional squalls of comparatively short duration disturbing the placidity of steady winds, blue sky, and dancing white-capped waves. But as the good ship drew near the famous cape, the wind began to howl menacingly about her, and although sail was shortened until she was running under little more than bare poles, she bent over at the bidding of the swift succeeding blasts, and ploughed

her way through the black waves, while the snowy foam flakes flew high over her stout bulwarks.

"We're like to have a hard time getting round, Mr. Houghton," said Captain Sampson to the chief-mate, as he eyed the barometer somewhat apprehensively. "The glass goes down still, and the air's thickening fast."

"It looks like it, sir," responded the chief-mate solemnly. "But the *Osprey's* a good stanch ship, and she'll weather it all right."

There certainly was something ominous and depressing about the whole environment of the vessel. The sky hung dark and lowering above her, never a ray of sunlight breaking through the gloom; mysterious shapes darted hither and thither through the sullen-hued waters at her bow, while close in her wake flew the repulsive sea-ravens.

In the morning there would be scores of these ill-omened birds perched on the stays, and refusing to be scared away by the hootings of the troubled sailors; and even Ralph found it hard to resist joining in the superstitious fears of the men, who were becoming possessed with the notion that some curse rested upon the ship, and that they were doomed never to get around the dreaded cape whose name seems so strangely inappropriate.

CHAPTER IX

SAFE THROUGH THE STORM

THE nearer the *Osprey* drew to the Cape of Good Hope, the more fiercely the elements seemed to be opposing her progress, until even into the stout heart of Captain Sampson there came questionings as to whether it might not be wise to turn about, and by steering due west, reach the Southern Pacific Ocean around Cape Horn.

There is one advantage that the whaler possesses over nearly all other ships that do business upon the great waters—she is not bound down to any particular route. Supplied as she is with meat and drink for years at a time, and being thus independent of all base of supplies, while carrying no cargo to be landed at any particular port, she can roam hither and thither, according to the will or wisdom of her commander, and if Neptune and Boreas should, as in the present instance, appear to have conspired together to oppose her passage in one direction, there is no reason why she should not gracefully submit, and steer away on

another course. Not without a more determined struggle, however, would so sturdy a veteran as Captain Sampson succumb. He knew his ship; he had a more than usually good crew, and he would maintain the fight until it became sheer madness to persist.

These days of storm and stress, while the *Osprey* fought gallantly with wind and waves, made an indelible impression upon Ralph's mind. Uncomfortable as it was on deck, he could not bear to be below, cooped up in the narrow cabin, and even though there was no work for him to do, he kept in the open air, missing nothing of the heroic contest.

So fiercely and continuously did the seas break over her bows that the men could not stay in their usual place forward, but were driven back to the waist of the ship, where they stood in a line along the bulwarks, each one having taken the precaution to secure himself by a bowline at his waist, whereby he was prevented from being swept into the scuppers by the billows that leaped aboard from time to time.

Captain Sampson called Ralph to the quarter-deck, and assigned him a post at the foot of the mizzen-mast, where he was safe from the seas, and but partially exposed to the force of the wind and dashing spray.

"Are you thinking you had better have stayed ashore than go to sea, Ralph?" he said, standing close beside him, and putting his hand upon his shoulder in quite a fatherly way. "You did not count upon having such a time as this, perhaps."

"No, I did not, sir," Ralph responded; "I had no idea there could be so dreadful a storm, and that it could keep up so long; but I'm not wishing myself ashore all the same. I've just got to learn to get used to weather like this, that's all."

"That's the way to look at it, my boy," said the captain, with warm approval in his tone. "Seafaring folk need stout hearts, and those that haven't got them should stay on land. We'll weather the storm all right, and soon forget it when we are in the Pacific."

Confidently as Captain Sampson spoke, it really seemed at times as if the *Osprey* would not be able to withstand the tremendous assaults of the tempest. The small storm-sails with great difficulty bent upon the foremast were blown from their bolt-ropes and carried off like whiffs of smoke to vanish in the gloom to leeward; in spite of running under bare poles the ship would again and again be pressed down by the fearful force of the blast, until her going over on her beam-ends seemed only the matter of another minute; and then she would take advantage of a momentary easing of the wind to

right herself, only to be met by a yeasty surge leaping aboard with full intent to sweep the deck clean of everything that was not lashed and battened beyond possibility of moving.

Well was it for the men that they had taken the precaution to secure themselves to the rail by the bowlines, in which they swung as in loosened belts, for the furious waves would surely have carried some of them off to death could they once have got them in their power.

Poor old "Smutty," as the cook was nicknamed, had a terrible time of it. The men could not wait until the storm subsided for their meals, and he had to prepare them somehow, being often driven to his wits' end to do it. More than once was his big pot of soup sent to waste in the lee scuppers by an inconsiderate wave bursting into the galley, and the carrying of the Captain's dinner into the cabin was a feat, after the successful accomplishment of which he always breathed more freely.

As for Soupey, he was in purgatory for the time being. The violence of the elements filled him with terror, and made him somewhat sea-sick in addition. Had he been free to do so, he would have crawled into his berth, and remained there until the danger was past. But instead of that he must perforce be on duty at the galley assisting the cook, and in the cabin waiting upon table, and

many a nasty tumble and hard knock fell to his lot, not to speak of the even harder words of the captain, who refused to make any allowance for his nervousness.

One time, had it not been for Ralph, Soupey would have undoubtedly gone overboard, taking with him Captain Sampson's dinner. He had just started from the galley with the beef, and was timorously making his way to the cabin, when a blast of wind of extraordinary violence hurled the ship over at the same time that a great billow broke in over the bows.

Sent staggering out of his course by the sudden slant of the ship, poor Soupey got right in the way of the foaming sea, which snatched him up as though he were a mere chip, and would certainly have carried him over the rail had not Ralph in time perceived his danger.

"Look out, Soupey! Grab this!" he cried, and, throwing himself after the struggling lad, he thrust into his hand the spare end of a rope which was attached to the foot of the mizzen-mast.

Soupey both saw and heard him, but instead of grasping the rope as directed, threw his arms about Ralph, clasping him around the neck with a desperate vigour that threatened to choke him.

"Let go of me! take hold of the rope!" cried Ralph, struggling to throw off the encumbering arms.

But he might as well have spoken to the winds. Soupey had something firm to hold on to, and it mattered little whether it was a part of the ship or one of the crew. He would not loosen his grasp until he was perfectly sure of being out of danger.

Happily Ralph retained his grip of the rope all right, and the waves rushed on, leaving the two locked tightly together sprawling upon the deck quite unharmed beyond a good drenching and an additional bruise or two.

Soupey had a very sheep-faced look when he got upon his feet again, and tried to mumble out some thanks for his rescue.

"It was mighty good of you to help me," he said, "seein' how mean I've been to you. I'd have been overboard sure if you hadn't stopped me." Then he hesitated for a moment as if gathering himself together for a big effort, and finally bawled out, while his face grew crimson, "But I won't be mean any more to you; 'pon my word I won't, and I'm real sorry for all the nasty things I've said and done to you."

Having thus delivered himself he darted off to the galley to cover his manifest confusion, leaving Ralph in a very happy frame of mind, for he not only felt proud, as he had good right to do, at having saved Soupey from certain death, but he was immensely gratified at the effect it had had upon the boy.

"He's not such a bad chap after all," he soliloquised. "He's got right feelings, even if he can be so provoking. I'm so glad he said what he did. I can be good friends with him now."

That day the gale reached its height, and then, as if satisfied that the *Osprey* was more than equal to its fiercest assaults, it began to subside.

On the following morning it was possible to take observations, and great was the satisfaction of all on board when Captain Sampson, after determining his longitude and latitude, announced that they were well beyond the Cape of Good Hope, and out on the broad bosom of the Pacific Ocean.

The *Osprey* was now entering the best of the cruising grounds of the sperm whale, and the mast-head was manned by the sharpest eyed of the crew. The weather was simply glorious, there being just sufficient breeze to keep the ship moving steadily under full sail, while the air was soft and balmy, and the sun shone with unclouded splendour.

Once the damage wrought by the gale had been made good, there was little work to be done, and Ralph was free to spend hours in his favourite eyrie on the main-truck, whence he could gaze out upon the illimitable expanse of dancing waters so beautifully blue, and wonder when the next whale would be sighted.

As it happened, the first object reported proved

to be not a whale but another vessel, and a very strange and striking spectacle she presented as she moved sluggishly through the crisp curls of the breeze-beaten waves. She had evidently been several years out, and by long exposure to the bleaching effects of wind and wave, her hull and rigging had lost all trace of paint and tar, and were as grey as a badger, while her hull below the waterline bore a thick-set crop of barnacles which completely hid her copper from sight. Only a few of her sails were set, the upper ones seeming to be unfit for use, as far as could be judged, and those that were hoisted, boasted so many patches that it was not easy to determine which was the original material, and which the super-added. Each masthead bore its human pinnacle, and they were in keeping with the vessel beneath.

"Why, they're just like the scarecrows the farmers put up in their cornfields at home!" exclaimed Ralph in astonishment; and he could not have described them more aptly, for long years of cruising without ever entering port to refit, had reduced their clothing to rags, which fluttered in the wind gaily enough, but were hardly suited to any less gentle climate than that in which the ships now were.

"It's to be hoped they'll get better clothes

before they go back to New Bedford," he exclaimed, "or I should think they'd be ashamed to go ashore."

As the ships drew near to each other the two captains, standing on their quarter-decks, began to shout through their trumpets, the one hardly waiting for the other in their impatience to hear the news.

"Ship ahoy! How long out, and what luck?" was Captain Sampson's salutation.

The *Petrel* of Nantucket. Four years out, and full to the hatches," was the reply. "Who are you, and what's your word?"

"The *Osprey* of New Bedford; six months out, and one whale so far," responded Captain Sampson.

"Will you come aboard?"

Now, an interchange of visits between whalers meeting in mid-ocean is no mere haphazard affair. Though known by the undignified name of a "gam," which suggests a gossip between old women rather than the meeting of such important individuals as two commanders of whale-ships, it is nevertheless conducted strictly according to a certain well-defined etiquette.

What a "gam" is, has been defined once for all by Herman Melville in this manner: "A social meeting of two or more whale-ships on a cruising-ground; when, after exchanging hails, they ex-

change visits by boat's crews, the captains remaining for the time on board of one ship, and the chief-mates on the other."

Captain Sampson having invited the captain of the *Petrel* on board his ship, it was Mr. Houghton's duty to go on board the *Petrel*, and as his boat was being lowered, Ralph, who was eager for a closer look at the strange, weather-beaten craft, sidled up to the chief-mate, with the request that he be permitted to accompany him. Mr. Houghton happened to be in a good humour at the moment, and gave a gruff consent.

"Pick up all the newspapers you can find in the cabin," he said, "and bring them along. These moss-backs will be glad to see anything so fresh as six months back, unless they have been gamming with some other vessel not so long out as ourselves."

Ralph hurriedly got together the papers, and scrambled into the boat, just as it was pushing off. On the way across to the *Petrel*, they met her captain coming over to the *Osprey*. He was one of the oddest-looking figures Ralph had ever set eyes upon, and he found it difficult to resist the temptation to laugh out loud, especially when the stroke-oar said in a stage whisper to the man next to him :

"Harpoons and lances, what a goney! Wher-

ever did he get that outfit? He'd make a fine advertisement for a Water Street store," alluding to the sailors' shops in Boston.

The object of this free criticism had on a tall silk hat that was fairly brown with age, a swallow-tailed coat, double-breasted, and adorned with big brass buttons, and white duck trousers, creased and crinkled, as if they had been rolled up into a ball, and left that way for dear knows how long.

No razor had touched his face since he had left port, and his grizzled beard hung almost to his waist, while his eyes had that peculiar far-away look which one might expect on the countenance of a Rip Van Winkle were he to appear in mortal flesh. Standing upright in the stern, with the big steering-oar thumping him in the small of the back, and the stroke-oar rapping his knees in front, his position was most awkward, yet he managed to maintain it with remarkable dignity in spite of the bobbing up and down of the boat as it danced over the waves. No notice did he deign to take of the chief-mate as, silently as shadows, he and his crew swept by, and Ralph heard Mr. Houghton chuckle in an amused way.

"Old Barnacle holds his head high," he said as if to himself. "He's got a full ship, and he won't take back-water from anybody. He'd carry himself differently if his ship was still clear."

Running alongside the *Petrel* Mr. Houghton climbed on board, followed by Ralph and the crew of the boat. They had a warm reception from the *Petrel's* men, who crowded about them eager to learn the latest news from home. Ralph's bundle of papers was quickly divided among the grateful recipients, and then he had a chance to look about him a little.

The ship presented a striking contrast to the *Osprey*. Everything seemed to have reached the last stage of usefulness. So worn and frayed was the rigging that it seemed as if the first severe storm must carry everything away, and all the fittings of the deck had the look of having been worn to the very verge of weakness.

Compared with the trim, stanch *Osprey* the *Petrel* seemed so forlorn and out-of-elbows, so to speak, that Ralph congratulated himself he did not belong to her company. Yet her people could well afford to look down upon the *Osprey*, for they had a cargo worth many score thousands of good dollars stowed safely away under their hatches, while the other ship had not yet got enough oil to pay for the provisions already consumed.

Of course there were many questions to be asked and answered, and some good stories to be told and heard, and the afternoon hours were passing away very pleasantly, when like the blast of a trumpet

Sakaio's stentorian voice came down from the mast-head of the *Osprey*.

"There she blows! There! there! She blows! she blows!" Instantly all thought of hospitality or etiquette was forgotten on both vessels.

With one great leap the chief-mate bounded over the *Petrel's* side into his boat, the crew tumbling recklessly after him, and off they went to their own ship. Ralph again crouched in the stern at the stroke-oar's feet.

Half-way across they met the *Petrel's* captain hastening back to his vessel, and shouting to those on board to lower away and give chase to the whales.

A few minutes later six whale-boats, three from each ship, were ploughing furiously through the water, and a thrilling race was in progress, with a school of whales two miles distant for the goal.

CHAPTER X

THE BITERS BITTEN

RALPH was inclined to resent the *Petrel's* participation in the chase.

"I'm sure they needn't be so greedy," he said to himself, as he watched the rowers in her boats straining every nerve to outstrip those of the *Osprey*, while their headsman shouted and stamped and gesticulated as if these were the first whales they had seen since leaving America. "Their ship's full to the brim now, and if they do catch more whales they've no room to stow the oil away."

But in taking this view of the case Ralph showed that he had yet much to learn about the peculiar occupation which he had adopted; for if there is one thing more than another that the veteran whaler insists upon, it is that—like a London omnibus—a ship, no matter how successful has been her hunt, always has room for one more. If another cask cannot be coaxed into the hold, why, there are still the cabins and the foc'sle, and right gladly will the captain and crew give up their

quarters to the precious oil, of which they think they can never get enough.

And so the *Petrel* folk were not to blame if they declined to leave the whales just sighted altogether to their mates of the *Osprey*, even though Ralph, in his innocence, condemned them for undue rapacity.

A more favourable afternoon for whale-chasing could not have been desired. The sky was almost cloudless, yet the sun shone not too hotly. A four-knot breeze crisped the blue bosom of the deep, and it was blowing from the whales towards the bows, so that the sound of the latter's advance would not be carried to their quarry prematurely. The great creatures—some ten in number, so far as could be made out from their spouts—were breaching and lob-tailing in evident enjoyment of life, and, unless startled in some way, promised to be an easy mark.

Strung out in a curving line, the six boats fairly leaped over the waves, as their brawny oarsmen made the stout ash blades bend like wands with their mighty strokes. The chief-mate was in a paroxysm of excitement. He was no less anxious that his boat should defeat those of the *Petrel* than he was to secure a whale, and unsparingly did he urge on his men with voice and gesture.

"Lay down to it now! Touch your toes with your foreheads! Lift her! Lift her! That's like

it! Break your backs and burst your lungs, but give it to her! give it to her! We're gaining, we're gaining! keep it up! Don't slacken! Now she's moving! She knows you, she knows she's got to hump herself! Don't let her loaf! Shove her—shove her—shove her, I tell you!"

Thus did he inspire his men to the utmost verge of human exertion, and right well did they respond. It really seemed to Ralph as if they must do themselves some injury in the reckless frenzy of their efforts. The veins stood out in great lines upon their foreheads, their eyes bulged from their sockets, and their breath came and went in hard deep pants, like the noise of a steam-engine.

But oh! how faultless was their stroke! and how glorious the speed with which they drove the whale-boat through the water!

Ere one-half the distance was accomplished the chief-mate had outstripped all the others save the captain of the *Petrel*. His boat hung close alongside, and refused to be shaken off. Evidently its crew was composed of the strongest and most skilful rowers on the ship, and, seasoned as they were by years of hard work, they were dangerous rivals indeed.

"Bend to it, my men! Bend to it!" shouted Mr. Houghton, bending forward himself with every stroke so that his body might keep time to the

motion of the boat. "We must beat him. We must, I tell you. Hear me ! If we get in the first iron it'll be a five-dollar gold piece to each of you, a five-dollar gold piece ! Do you hear that ? One for each of you. Pull now—pull! and make her jump."

Carried away by the excitement of the moment Ralph rose to his knees, and putting his hands on the stroke-oar, added his strength to that of the oarsman, pushing for all he was worth as the other pulled.

The chief-mate saw the movement and it pleased him. "That's right, my boy ! that's the spirit," he cried. "A gold piece for you too if we're the first to get fast."

The whales, still unconscious of the impending peril, were blowing and breaching with impressive vigour, and the hopes of the headmen in the different boats, who alone could see what they were doing, rose high. There was a fish for each boat, and over, so that it was more a question of pride than of business that impelled them to race against each other.

Facing the bow of the boat as he was, Ralph had a fine view of the whole situation, and in his intense anxiety for the chief-mate to leave the *Petrel's* captain behind, lifted up his voice in exhortation and encouragement after the manner of his superior officer.

"Pull away, men, pull away!" said he in a penetrating whisper. "We're gaining, we're gaining. We'll beat them now; pull away." Sakaio, in the bow, throwing all his vast strength into each stroke, could not forbear a smile at Ralph's appeal. The young fellow was in reality usurping the functions of the chief-mate, but neither officer nor men had any thought of taking him to task for it. They all had only one idea, and that was to be first within striking distance of the whales.

The two leading boats had got within a hundred yards of the disporting leviathans ere the latter took alarm, then with a mighty splash they almost simultaneously vanished beneath the foaming water.

"There go flukes!" shouted the headsmen of the boats as in one breath, and instantly the rowers ceased their furious toil, and leaned upon their oars, panting and perspiring.

No one could say at what spot the whales would rise after sounding, and there was nothing to do but to await their reappearance.

The temporary rest was very welcome to the men who, in the exciting race, had well-nigh reached the limit of human endurance, and Sakaio improved the time by seeing that the harpoons lay ready to hand, and that the line was all clear and well coiled in the tubs.

"Oh, I do hope they'll come up close to us!" exclaimed Ralph, as he swept the surrounding water with his eager gaze. "It would be too bad if the *Petrel's* boats got fast first."

The chief-mate glanced at him and smiled indulgently, but said nothing. He liked the lad's spirit, and foresaw in him a successful whalesman when he came to full manhood.

The minutes of suspense while the whales remained down were very hard to bear, but at length they were brought to a dramatic close by a huge bull-whale rising to the surface one hundred and fifty yards away, and a little nearer the captain of the *Petrel's* boat than Mr. Houghton's.

But this did not daunt the latter. With a shout that fairly electrified his men he set them going at full speed, and with half-a-dozen strenuous strokes they drew up alongside their rivals.

Then side by side the boats tore on, neither gaining any advantage, and it looked as if they might reach the prize together when the whale, after being motionless for a few moments, began to move off sideways in such a way as to bring the *Petrel's* boat between him and Mr. Houghton's. Ralph, seeing this, uttered a groan of disappointment, and the chief-mate's countenance darkened ominously while he hissed at his men: "Lift her! lift her, you lubbers! We'll beat them yet." A

few more frenzied strokes, and he cried to the harpooneer : "Stand up, Sakaio. Give him the iron—now!"

As a matter of fact, the bow of the *Petrel's* boat intervened between him and the black hulk of the great bull, but the gigantic harpooneer was not to be foiled by such an obstacle. Rising to his full height, and poising himself with marvellous skill upon the extreme edge of the boat, with one splendid sweep of his sinewy right arm, he sent the harpoon hurtling through the air over the heads of the crew of the other boat, and with a soft thud it buried itself in the great creature's body just behind the side fin.

There was an exultant shout from the chief-mate's crew, and a howl of rage from the *Petrel's* at the successful manœuvre, and then came a wild flurry as the stricken whale, after thrashing about with its flukes for a moment, sounded furiously, and the *Petrel's* boat backed out of the way of the hissing line. With fearful swiftness the line ran out until the first tub was empty, and the spare line had to be spliced on. It, too, was rapidly being exhausted, and Mr. Houghton was about to call up one of the other boats to his assistance, when the whale halted in his downward dive, and the line slackened. Greatly relieved, he changed places with the harpooneer, as was the

custom, and selecting the longest and sharpest lance, was ready for the final operation.

All eyes scanned the sea eagerly, the men holding their oars in readiness for an immediate spurt, Ralph having taken Sakaio's place on his thwart, although the heavy oar was about as much as he could manage. Presently the chief-mate cried exultantly—

"There she blows! Lift her now, lift her!"

The rowers responded with hearty vigour that really did lift the boat over the waves, and, ere the whale had time to sound again, the chief-mate sent a lance deep into his vitals.

A jet of dark blood rising from his spout-hole, showed that he was mortally wounded, yet there was still plenty of fight in him. Lifting his terrible tail high in the air, he brought it down upon the water with a fearful blow that sounded like the report of a great gun. Had the boat been beneath that irresistible stroke, both it and its occupants would have been crushed like flies. But the instant his lance went home, Mr. Houghton had shouted "Stern all!" and the boat had retreated out of danger.

Failing to smite his assailants, whom he knew must be near at hand, but whom the peculiar position of his eyes prevented him from seeing, the whale sounded again, and the line ran out with ominous

rapidity. Sakaio just had time to take two additional turns of it around the logger-head ere it reached its highest speed, but even this seemed to put hardly any check upon it, although it put such a strain upon the boat that the light craft fairly flew through the water, which boiled under her bow as she obeyed the whale's bidding. Soon a blue smoke began to come from the logger-head, and Sakaio, snatching off his hat, dashed water upon it, lest it should break into flame.

A momentary slackening enabled more turns to be taken, and now the line held better, with the result that the speed of the boat increased until the foaming water flowed in over the bows, and the men, relieved from rowing, began to bale out busily.

Perilous as their position was, Ralph forgot it all in the passion of excitement, and, holding fast to the oar, waited with bated breath for the final struggle, which he knew could not be long delayed.

It would indeed be hard to conceive of a more thrilling situation in which men could be placed. The line, now taut as a bowstring, ran from stem to stern of the boat, quivering in every strand like a just-struck harp string; drawn furiously onward by the maddened whale, the boat churned through the water with a continual

cascade pouring in at her bows, and a whirling eddy in her wake; while within her the men clung to their seats with might and main, for the utmost steadiness was required, or else all would have been spilled out into the sea.

For many unforgetful minutes this wild flight continued, and only incessant baling kept the boat afloat. Yet the chief-mate would have allowed her to sink beneath the waves, ere he would have cut the line and let his prize escape.

There was a limit, however, to the strength of even so mighty a monster as he had been lucky enough to get fast to, and now a slight slackening of the strain upon the line gave him the opportunity to shout, "Haul in! haul in there, I say."

Immediately swinging around, so as to face towards the whale instead of having their backs to him, the men took hold of the line, and began pulling it in hand over hand, while yet the boat was being towed on.

It came in steadily, and their hearts rejoiced as they saw the end of the hard fight drawing near. Presently, with a great splash, the whale rose to the surface about a hundred feet away, and sent up spout after spout, whose grey hue showed plainly that a little more would finish him.

Ranging up by his flank the chief-mate sent lance after lance into the huge body, each time

taking care to back out of the way of the furious
wallow that followed the cruel stroke.

As the blood poured forth in streams, crimsoning
the water all about, and still the great creature
fought for his life, Ralph's feelings underwent a
revulsion. The fierce desire for victory gave way
to pity for the sorely-tortured monster. It seemed
to him that there was needless cruelty in the
method of killing, and that some shorter, more
merciful mode of effecting the object should be
possible.

He grew impatient for the end, and when the
chief-mate, standing up in the bow of the boat,
not only thrust the keen lance deep into the whale,
who seemed for the moment to have fallen into a
sort of stupor, but, instead of withdrawing it for
another thrust, kept it in the wound, and turned
it round and round, as if he were stirring something
inside, Ralph fairly sickened at the sight, and turn-
ing his back upon it, bent his head over the oar,
muttering to himself—

"It's just dreadful; why can't they manage to
kill the poor creature at once somehow, and not
keep it in misery so long? I wonder it doesn't
turn upon us, and smash us all to bits with its
awful tail."

At that moment Mr. Houghton's lance reached
the spot for which he had been so daringly seeking,

to wit, the whale's heart, and suddenly starting from his temporary trance, the giant of the seas broke into the frenzied "flurry" that preceded the stillness of death.

So fearful was the commotion as the huge body was flung this way and that in the final throes of agony, that the occupants of the boat were fain to cower in the bottom, and hold on to the thwarts for dear life. Even the chief-mate and harpooneer had to lay aside their pride, and take a humbler attitude than was their wont until the wild uproar should have passed.

The boat had backed off as soon as the flurry began, and seemed to be out of reach of those terrible flukes that were smiting the blood-stained waves with such appalling force, when an unexpected lurch of the maddened monster took his assailants unawares, and before they could evade the danger, the tremendous tail caught the boat underneath amidships, and tossed it clean out of the water, breaking it in two as though it had been of pasteboard, and precipitating the crew into the seething whirl of bloody brine.

CHAPTER XI

A TRIAL OF FAITH

ALL whalesmen are good swimmers. More than foolhardy would be the fellow who would venture into so perilous a business without being able to keep himself afloat in any kind of a sea, for such a catastrophe as had just befallen the chief-mate's boat was by no means a rare one. Happily, the whale's tremendous stroke had reached only the boat. None of the crew had been touched by it, and so, on being thrown into the water, they all at once set about finding something to cling to until rescue should arrive. Some caught hold of oars, one of the tub which had held the line, others laid hold of the fragments of the boat, which, of course, floated all right. Ralph was one of these last, and when he had cleared the gory water from his eyes, and recovered his breath, he looked about him, feeling a curious inclination to laugh.

The poor whale, now at last motionless for ever, seemed to have so completely turned the table upon his enemies ere yielding up his life, that in view of

all the torture he had suffered at their hands, there did seem to be something retributive about their present position. It was, however, no laughing matter. All the other boats had gone on in pursuit of the rest of the school of whales, while the two ships were but dimly discernible far away to leeward, and even though the *Osprey's* look-outs had seen the disaster, the ship would take a long time to beat up against the wind.

Moreover, the wind was manifestly rising, and if it became a strong blow, as it promised to do, the situation of the boat's crew would be very critical. Inexperienced as he was, Ralph could see this for himself, and he lifted up his heart in prayer to God for the deliverance of his companions and himself from their great danger.

Mr. Houghton, maintaining as cheery a bearing as if such upsets were of every-day occurrence, bid the men get near together.

"Close in here!" he shouted to them. "The more the merrier in this kind of a scrape."

They did their best to obey, and succeeded pretty well, although the growing roughness of the water made the task a difficult one.

"Now then, my hearties, keep up your spirits. The ship will soon pick us up."

Their perilous plight had indeed been observed on board the *Osprey*, and Captain Sampson, with

the few men left him, was doing his best to get to their aid against the headwind. But the distance was great, and the rate of progress slow, and in the meantime a new element of danger was added to the situation. The sharks, attracted by the blood which had poured from the whale, now appeared in numbers, and only by vigorous splashing and shouting could the men keep them off.

As the horrid creatures swam about, showing their fins above the waves, and splashing fiercely in their efforts to get before one another, a deadly numbing terror crept over Ralph, his strength seemed to go from him, and he would surely have let go of the portion of the boat to which he clung had not Sakaio, who was near him, noting his faintness, put his strong arm about him, saying encouragingly, "Keep hold, Ralph. Keep hold. Be all right soon."

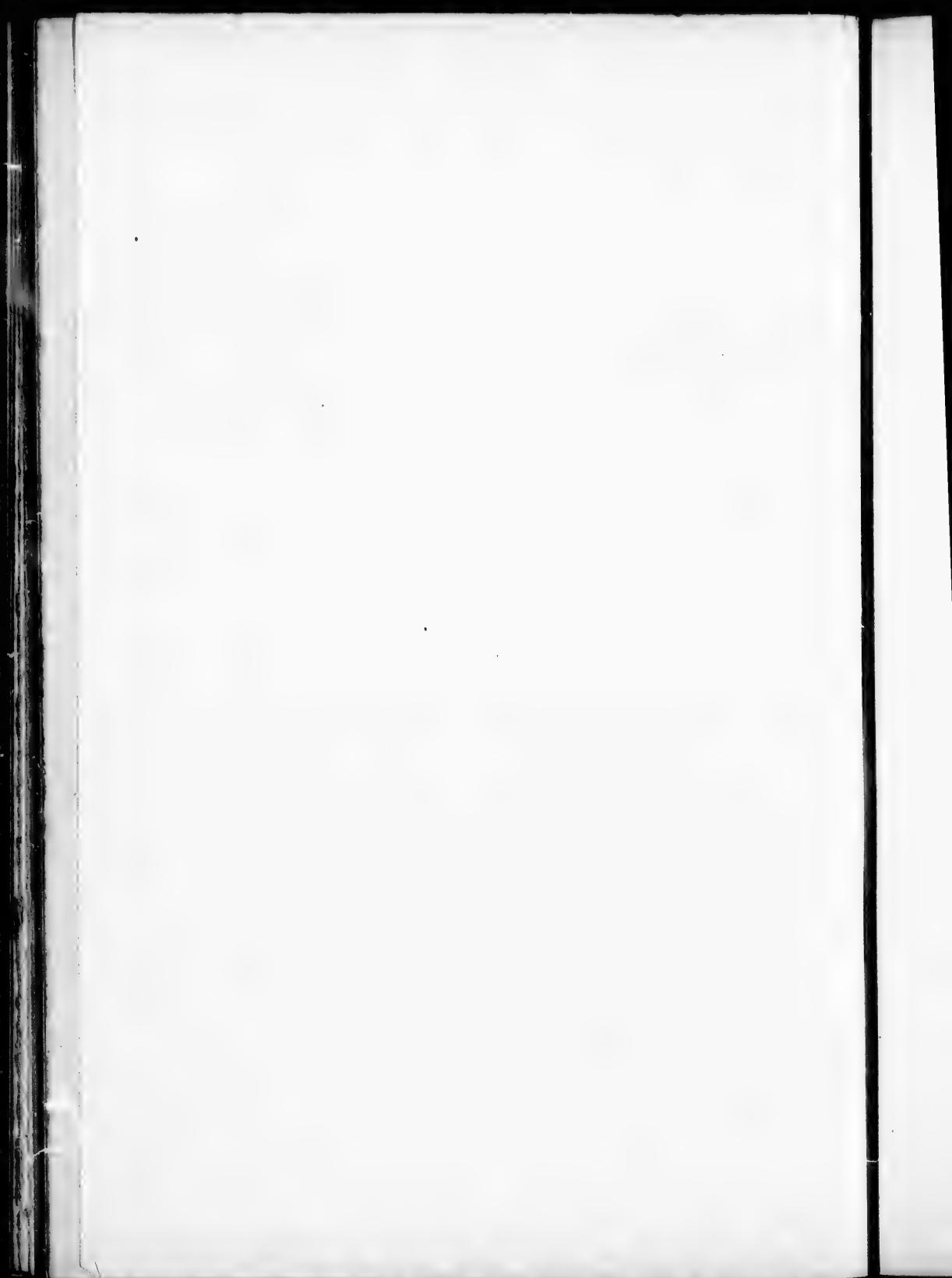
The kind action gave him fresh heart, and he braced himself for yet further endurance, saying in a low tone to the harpooneer—

"How good you are, Sakaio! We will trust in God, and He will deliver us." And again there came to him with wonderful force those beautiful, inspiring words, "The Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.

With the waves flinging themselves in their faces, and the remorseless, ravenous sharks nosing about



"KEEP HOLD, RALPH—BE ALL RIGHT SOON."



their feet, ready to tear them limb from limb if they but got the chance, it was indeed a time to test one's faith, and Ralph could hardly be blamed if for the moment his courage faltered and his heart sank.

In the meantime the *Osprey* was gallantly breasting the billows, and by short tacks making her way to the rescue. On she came under a cloud of sail that fairly made her reel under its great pressure, but Capt'n Sampson was quite content to take the risk of having some of the top hamper carried away rather than lose a minute's time in reaching his imperilled men.

Ralph had long since come to have feelings towards the good ship as if she were a living personality, and no member of her crew entertained a more enthusiastic admiration for her. But never had she seemed so worthy of admiration as now when she bore down to the rescue in such grand style. The nearer she came the higher rose his spirits, until he presently found himself joining heartily in a sea "chanty" the chief-mate had started to inspire the men, and marking time by slapping his hand upon the section of the boat to which he clung.

When the *Osprey* had got within fifty yards of them, the spare boat was quickly lowered with the captain himself in the stern, and in another minute

all danger was over, and the dripping whalers were out of reach of both wave and shark.

"I got my fish, sir," said the chief-mate to Captain Sampson in the most matter-of-fact way; "and he's a big one; eighty barrels of oil in him at least—if not a hundred; but he's smashed my boat."

"I'm only too thankful that he did not smash yourself or some of your men, Mr. Houghton," responded the captain with a good-humoured laugh. "You've done a fine day's work, even if you have lost a boat. We must get this big fellow fast to the ship now, in case he should take a notion to sink."

Only one of the other two boats belonging to the *Osprey* had secured a fish, and, oddly enough, the *Petrel's* boats—although they had tried as hard as if their ship were still empty—had failed entirely, very much to the chagrin of their crew.

Darkness came on ere the two whales were safely fastened to the *Osprey*, one on either side, and then the tired men were able to rest after the excessive labours of the day.

Both the prizes yielded a fine store of oil and spermaceti, and good-humour reigned on board during the succeeding days, and the dirty but cheerful toil of "cutting-in" and "trying-out" went on until everything valuable about the

whales had been stowed away under hatches, after which the ship was all cleaned up, and every trace of the befouling business removed.

Then followed a whole fortnight of almost entire inaction, save such little work as was necessary to keep the sails trimmed, and everything shipshape on board. The weather was steadfastly fine, clear, and warm. There was but little wind, sometimes none at all, and the *Osprey* moved lazily through the blue waters of the South Pacific, seeming to be on no particular course, but just drifting about at her own sweet will. During this interval of peace and leisure, Ralph was exposed to a novel trial, which for a time gave him deep concern.

It has already been mentioned that he shared a little cabin with the carpenter and blacksmith, "Chips" and "Smudge," as the other men were wont to call them. They were both middle-aged men, of somewhat quiet and reserved nature, and Ralph had got along with them very well indeed. To be sure they had both chaffed him a little about his being so faithful in reading his Bible and saying his prayers, but they had not gone very far with it, and he had easily borne their bantering.

But now their interest in the matter took a new turn. What prompted them to their course of action it would be hard to say, unless it was the Evil One himself, acting upon the well-known adage that he

always finds some mischief for idle hands. Idle these two men certainly were. They had nothing to do with the working of the ship, and there being no demand for their special line of work at the time, they were men of leisure. What they did, was to set themselves to undermine Ralph's faith in the Bible.

This they undertook with subtlety and skill worthy of a far better cause. Engaging him in discussion about the miracles and other supernatural elements of the Divine Book, they suggested difficulties and grounds of doubt that had never before entered his mind. Then with regard to the characters of the Bible, they took up the lives of Abraham, of David, of Solomon, of Peter, of Judas, and of others who had yielded to temptation and fallen into sin, and tried to prove from their unhappy failures that the whole fabric of Christianity was a mere human thing, and in no-wise better than Islamism or Buddhism, for instance, in which, of course, they had no faith whatever.

Now, it would have been far better for Ralph if at the very outset he had declined the combat, and refused to measure wits with these men, as to the sincerity of whose contentions he was more than doubtful. But he had a natural fondness for argument, and feeling perfectly sure of his ground, he met them bravely, doing his best to answer their objections and to parry their attacks.

Ere-long, however, he found himself being worsted so manifestly that there was no concealing his discomfiture. The two men overbore him at almost every point, showing a knowledge of Scripture that was certainly surprising in view of their rejection of its Divine authority.

Poor Ralph was in sore straits. It was his first encounter with infidelity, and in truth he was ill prepared for such a trial of intellectual strength. To his dismay, he found the arguments of the two sceptics taking hold of his mind, and the question shaping itself within him whether after all there might not be some truth in what they advanced.

Not only so, but what disturbed him still more was the discovery that, lurking within his own heart, was a strange kind of response to these assaults upon the sacred Book, just as if they touched a chord whose existence he had not hitherto suspected.

All this upset him greatly, and for several days he was in a very unhappy state of mind, finding slight comfort in prayer, and none at all in the reading of the Word.

At length the burden of his trouble became intolerable, and one lovely night, when the ship seemed to be sleeping upon the bosom of the deep, so gentle was her movement, and the stars were scintillating in the deep blue firmament, as

if each one were an opening into the ineffable brightness of the home above, Ralph betook himself to his favourite eyrie, the maintop, there to wrestle with the enemy of doubt, as Jacob wrestled with the angel in his tent beside the brook. Kneeling down, with his face against the mast, he prayed as he never had in his life before.

"Almighty God, my Father in heaven, take pity on me, for I am in great trouble. I am not wise, O God; I know very little, but I have always believed everything that I read in the Bible until now that these men have been talking with me, and they have put doubts in my mind, such as I knew nothing about before, and which have made me very unhappy. O God, please give me the light and strength that I need; increase my faith, fill me with Thy spirit, and teach me Thy way, that I may walk therein steadfastly."

After this manner he prayed long and earnestly, and in due time the answer came. While he was yet upon his knees a sudden warmth and light seemed to flood his soul. So real was the experience that instantly he looked up to the skies, thinking that the heavens must have opened above him. The heavy burden fell away from his heart, the dark cloud of depression disappeared from his mind, and in the ecstasy of deliverance he rose to his feet and burst into song.

It was "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow," that he sang, and just as he reached the end of the verse Sakaio's head showed above the edge of the truck.

"I hear you singing. I like it. You sing fine," said the harpooneer in a pleased tone. "You teach me sing like that?"

There was no one on board that he would rather have seen at that moment than Sakaio. As soon as the big fellow had got fairly upon the truck Ralph flung his arms about him, and gave him a hug that nearly upset him.

"O Sakaio, I'm so happy!" he cried. "God has just answered my prayers, and has helped me more than I can tell you. Those men have been talking to me about the Bible, and putting thoughts into my mind which troubled me terribly, but it is all over now. They can't bother me any more, but I'll just pray for them that they may come to see how wrong they are, and may seek pardon from God, whose blessed Book they have been trying to injure."

Now, of course, this was not very clear to the native. He had still very much to learn before it would be. But he was intelligent and sympathetic enough to understand that his friend was very much pleased about something which was of great importance, and he accordingly rejoiced with him.

From himself Ralph's thoughts now turned to his swarthy pupil, and in the warmth of his gratitude to God for the timely help vouchsafed, he pledged himself anew to do all that in him lay to bring the light to that darkened soul.

"Sakaio," he said, clasping his arm as they sat close together on the truck, "you'll let me teach you more about God, won't you? and you'll pray to Him yourself, and He will answer you just as He has answered me."

Sakaio nodded his head vigorously. "Oh yes," he responded cordially. "Me learn all about your God. He very much better than my God, I think."

The poor fellow's conception of the matter was still very crude. What had impressed him was that Ralph's God evidently took good care of him, and that Ralph found great comfort in worshipping Him; whereas he had not much confidence in the good offers of his own dark deities, and certainly got little comfort from the worship of them. In other words, he was ready to transfer his allegiance simply because he believed he would be materially advantaged by the business.

Ralph realised this in a measure, but he had full confidence in his being able in time to lead Sakaio to a loftier plane of thinking, and he was willing to labour patiently towards that end.

They had a good long talk together that night, in the course of which Sakaio opened his heart to Ralph as he had never done before, and the latter could not help being deeply touched by the simplicity with which the untutored South Sea Islander revealed himself.

It was not many days later that Ralph had another revelation as to the nature of his friend, and one which startled him greatly at the time, as it also made plain to him how much had to be done before he could be considered truly civilised.

It was Captain Sampson's custom to give his men a treat occasionally in the way of a supply of rum sufficient to enable them to have a good glassful apiece. The custom was a bad one in every way, and to Ralph, who had been brought up to rigid teetotalism, it was particularly obnoxious. But the men, almost without exception, enjoyed it, and as it made the captain popular with them, there was not much likelihood of its being done away with.

On this occasion Sakaio had managed to secure more than his usual portion, and the harmful spirits mounted to his brain, setting it on fire.

He began to boast of his royal descent, and of the great things he would do when he came into his own again, accompanying his oration with much vigour of action.

This presently excited the ire of a negro, who

threw out a taunt which touched Sakaio to the quick. He retorted with an insulting epithet, the negro responded in a still coarser manner, and the next moment the harpooneer, whipping out his sheath-knife, hurled himself upon him with murderous fury !

CHAPTER XII

A TALK WITH THE CHIEF-MATE

RALPH, it need hardly be said, had not been sharing in the distribution of grog, but it happily chanced that he was near when Sakaio and the negro began their altercation.

Fearing that some violence would ensue, he drew still nearer, and when the harpooneer made at the negro with full intent to stab him to the heart, Ralph was just in time to grasp the uplifted hand, and to stay the descent of the knife.

"No, no, Sakaio," he cried, "don't do that; you mustn't kill him. The negro, appalled by his sudden peril, fortunately made no effort at resistance, and a couple of the other men coming to Ralph's support, Sakaio was prevented from doing any mischief. But his wrath still raged hotly, and on being separated from his antagonist, he dashed down the knife, and went off to the bows with his face contorted with anger.

Ralph presently followed, and found him sitting upon a coil of hawser in an attitude of profound

dejection. The fact was the poor fellow felt utterly miserable. According to his half-savage way of looking at things he had been disgraced before his shipmates, not because he had been overcome of fury, but because he had not executed his fell purpose when he drew his sheath-knife. He had been made a child of, he thought, and this rankled sore within his breast.

Regarding Ralph as the chief instrument of his humiliation, he was in no humour to listen to him, and when, laying his hand upon his shoulder, he said with deep sympathy in his voice: "I don't wonder you got so mad, Sakaio. That black nap was most aggravating, but oh, how dreadful it would have been had you stabbed him as you intended to do!" the harpooneer shook him off roughly, growling out: "You go way. Me have nothing to say to you."

Ralph's first impulse was to stay and reason with Sakaio, but on second thoughts he went away, saying in a soothing tone: "Never mind, Sakaio. You'll be thankful to me to-morrow that I didn't let you kill Blackie. You see if you're not."

It was not until the next morning the two met again, and then Ralph's kindly prediction found fulfilment, for Sakaio came up to him with a broad smile on his tatooed countenance, and taking both

of Ralph's hands in his, lifted them up and down, saying: "You very good to me. You much more wise than poor Sakaio. Me very glad you not let me kill poor Blackie."

"And I'm just as glad, Sakaio," responded Ralph, heartily returning the hand-shake. "You would have been sorry all your life if you had done it."

Captain Sampson, who took far more interest in the welfare of his men than did many commanders of whaling-ships, felt very grateful to Ralph for his timely intervention, and, calling him into his cabin, thanked him for it in the presence of the mates, which Ralph rightly felt to be a signal honour.

Not only so, but he decided to discontinue the distribution of rum, taking warning from the narrow escape there had been from a dreadful tragedy on board his ship, and thus Ralph felt trebly rewarded for his prompt action.

Soon after this Ralph had a fresh revelation of the wonderful skill and courage required for the successful chase of the sperm whale. While sailing steadily along under full canvas, whales were raised on the port side, and the ship at once steered in their direction. But, as the *Osprey* bore down upon them, they suddenly took fright, and set off at a rate that would soon take them out of sight.

The order to lower the boats was therefore given, and soon three were in pursuit, the rowers straining every nerve and muscle in their efforts to gain upon the fleeing monsters. It was a stern-chase, and a long one; but by dint of tremendous exertion, the chief-mate's boat was brought near enough for Sakaio to plant his harpoon in a good place.

Strange to say the stricken whale, instead of sounding as usual, kept right on, towing the boat behind him as if it was of no account whatever, and going faster than before. The strain thus brought upon the harpoon was too severe for it not to be soon drawn out, and to prevent this, which would inevitably mean the loss of the whale, the chief-mate resorted to "pitch-poling." Despite the desperate efforts, the rowers could get the boat no nearer the flying whale than forty feet. At such a distance the harpoon would have been useless, but not so the long lance with its light pine handle.

Then began a most amazing exhibition of skill on the part of the chief-mate. Standing erect in the bow of the boat, and, balancing himself with wonderful adroitness while it tore through the foaming water, he hurled the gleaming lance again and again at the great black bulk in front of him, never failing to bury it clear to the head, and then deftly withdrawing it by means of the warp, a light rope attached to the end.

No whale, however strong, could long stand so many wounds. His spout presently became tinged with blood, which grew darker and thicker, until at last the swift onrush of the monster slackened, then ceased altogether, and with a final flurry he lay a lifeless mass upon the water, which was reddened with his own blood.

"That's a good day's work!" said Mr. Houghton, complacently surveying his prize. "But for this lance," and he held up the gory instrument of death, "we'd have lost him sure, and now he'll yield us not far short of sixty barrels, if I'm any judge."

In the heat of the chase the boat had got a long distance from the *Osprey*, whose sails could just be made out on the horizon, but there was plenty of time before dark for the ship to come up, and the sea was fairly calm, so the occupants of the boat took things easy, all save Ralph indulging in the luxury of a smoke, for, in anticipation of some such situation, they took good care never to set out without their pipes and tobacco.

The chief-mate was in high good-humour. His boat had already taken as many whales as the other boats combined, and while even he was willing to admit that fortune had favoured him, still he realised that if he had not known his business thoroughly the results would not have been so satisfactory.

"Well, Ralph," he said, as he withdrew his pipe from his lips in order to knock the ashes out and put in a fresh charge, "that was an exciting bit of a run, wasn't it? But for the pitch-poling we'd have had no whale this afternoon, and I flatter myself there are not many men in these waters that would have done this job better. What do you think?"

"I think it was just wonderful, sir," Ralph responded enthusiastically. "I don't see how you ever managed to throw the lance like that. It took you a long time to learn how, didn't it?"

"Well, you can't learn it in a day, that's sure," said Mr. Houghton, evidently well pleased at Ralph's warm words, "but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll show you how some time when I get the chance, and then you can practise it for yourself."

"Oh, thank you, sir," cried Ralph delightedly, "you're very, very kind. I should like so much to learn. Sakaio is teaching me how to throw the harpoon, and so I'll soon learn the whole business."

"You've quite settled on it to stick to whaling for life then, Ralph?" the chief-mate asked, giving him a curious searching look.

"Why, yes, sir. I think so," answered Ralph with a quick glance at the veteran's face, for he was struck by something in his tone, and would have liked to add, "Why do you ask, sir?"

"I don't make any pretension to being a prophet, Ralph," said the chief-mate, after a pause, as if he had been thinking deeply, "but I venture to guess that you won't spend your days on a whaling-ship. You're cut out for something better, even though you may not think so yourself now. But you'll see things differently before you're many years older."

Ralph was very much puzzled by Mr. Houghton's remark. Being still full of enthusiasm for the sea, and for the chase of the sperm whale too, albeit he thought that some of its incidental features seemed rather cruel, he had no other plans for the future than to continue in the vocation he had adopted.

He wondered, therefore, why the chief-mate should speak in so assured a tone of his giving up whaling for some other pursuit; and Mr. Houghton, reading aright the expression on his countenance, went on to say—

"You're evidently a good deal surprised at my talk, Ralph, but I think I'm about right all the same. I've seen a good deal of human nature in my time, and if I know anything of it you're not the sort to stick to whaling, and I don't mind telling you the reason. You're made of too fine stuff for this business. You're bound to get dead sick of it in time, and any way, even if you did not, you'd be just wasting your life staying on board a whaler

when you might be doing far better at something else."

There was something in the speaker's tone that was quite new to Ralph, a blending of regard and sympathetic interest such as he had never looked for in the veteran whaleman, whose manner towards him had hitherto been one more of toleration than anything else.

" You may be right, sir," he returned respectfully. " You know so much more than I do about it, but just now it seems to me I don't want to make any change."

Mr. Houghton smiled in a superior way, and was about to say something further, when Sakaio sang out: " Ship ahoy! be quick there, you *Osprey!* " and all eyes were turned upon the ship, which had now come within hailing distance. No time was lost in getting the big prize safely secured, and then the boat's crew climbed on board to receive the congratulations of their less fortunate fellows.

What the chief-mate had said made a deep impression upon Ralph, although the full meaning was not clear to him, and in the years to come, when so great a change did take place in his life's plan, he often recalled his words, and gave him credit for being a better prophet than he claimed to be.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Houghton had no defi-

nite thought with regard to Ralph's future beyond the conviction that he was destined for something better than whaling. He recognised the higher qualities of the young sailor's nature, and foresaw that they could never attain their proper development amid his present surroundings, and he had spoken as he did with the idea of sowing seed in his mind that would bear fruit in due time. It was indeed a striking proof of how Ralph had impressed him that he should take the trouble to do this, for he was naturally a reserved, self-centred man, who showed slight interest in other people's concerns.

Now, while Ralph enjoyed the excitement of the chase and capture of the whale, he had no taste for the preparing and stowing away of the products of the prize. The horrible mess into which the ship got while the different processes were going on made him miserable, and he would have liked to have curled himself up in his berth and gone to sleep until it was well over.

He could not take refuge in the maintop, because there he would be smothered by the pungent acrid smoke from the try-works, whose fires, after being once well started with wood, were fed with the crisp, shrivelled scraps of tried-out blubber known as "fritters." He was fain, therefore, to remain on deck and amuse himself watching the important, even if repulsive operation.

When night had fallen upon the ship, the sight she presented was certainly both grand and startling. The carcass of the whale had been cut adrift, the wind was freshening, and, under easy sail, she drove on through the enfolding darkness, with the brilliant flames leaping up amidships and illuminating the forms and faces of the men as they toiled away at their sooty, greasy task.

Standing in front of the glowing furnace were the harpooneers, Sakaio and his mates, upon whom this duty always fell. They held long pitchforks in their hands, with which they tossed the big chunks of blubber into the bubbling caldrons, or stirred up the fires beneath them until the flames darted out at them furiously as though they would make them share the fate of those who tended the burning fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar set up.

Fresh stores of blubber were being continually brought to them, and as the caldrons filled up with scalding oil, it was drawn off into casks that the coopers had made ready, and then these were lowered into the hold, there to abide until the good ship should once more be beside her wharf at New Bedford.

By the time the trying-out was finished, the ship was in a deplorable state of grime and filth. Then came the orders to clean up. At this all hands

worked with a will, for whale-men like to be clean and comfortable as well as other folk do. The ashes from the furnaces supplied a potent lye, and the new-made oil itself had a wonderful cleansing influence, and so with plenty of water and unlimited elbow-grease, the scouring went on until every plank and rope had been delivered from its dirt, and the ship was fit for a five o'clock tea, were such a function meditated by her commander. Then everybody on board, from the captain down to Soupey, donned fresh clothes, and took things easy for a while.

The *Osprey* was now approaching that vast archipelago which spreads itself over the greater portion of the South Pacific, and Ralph began to look forward with eager interest to a stop being made at one of those "summer isles of Eden" which he knew to be all about him. Nearly a year had passed since he had set foot upon land, and he longed for the chance of doing so with an intensity that he did not care to confess, lest he should be suspected of getting homesick. Sakaio, too, showed a degree of excitement that was not his wont. His proximity to the region from whence he had come evidently stirred his blood, and put other thoughts into his brain than the chasing of whales. Indeed there was no one on board that would not have hailed with glad-

ness the announcement that they would cast anchor for a while, and take a welcome rest from the toils of whaling.

But Captain Sampson gave no hint as to his intentions in the matter, although he was approached by more than one who endeavoured to get at his mind, and the *Osprey* kept on, passing through the broad stretch of ocean separating Australia and New Zealand, and then steering northward towards Polynesia.

Norfolk Island had been sighted and left far astern, and the dark shores of New Caledonia, the big island whose inhabitants were reputed to be the worst cannibals in the world, would soon be rising above the horizon, when something happened that seriously disarranged Captain Sampson's programme, and wrought a complete change in Ralph's life, little as he imagined that such would be the issue.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WHALE'S REVENGE

THE *Osprey* was making good progress northward, when the masthead look-outs reported spouts on the starboard side, and boats were at once lowered. After a brief but strenuous pull, they came up with a large shoal of whales, comprising bulls, cows, and calves, and in a few minutes all the boats were fast to fine fish, and the prospects for a splendid day's work were most promising.

Ralph, as it happened, had not gone in the boat this time, being rather out of sorts, and was up in the maintop watching the chase, when he observed a huge bull whale breaking away from the others, and making straight for the ship.

Marvelling at this strange proceeding, but attaching no particular significance to it, he at first did not report it to those below. When, however, the whale came steadily on at so furious a pace, and with such manifest fixity of purpose that he realised it must mean mischief, he called out to Captain Sampson, who was at the helm for the time

being: "Whale ho! sir. Bearing right down on us!"

"Where away?" the captain called back.

"On the port bow, sir; about ten ship's lengths off," answered Ralph, his concern increasing as the monster approached with unabated speed, and a collision seemed immediately inevitable.

As soon as Captain Sampson made out the whale for himself, he brought the ship up in to the wind, for there was certainly something uncanny about the creature's conduct. The *Osprey* then came to a standstill, and, with her sails flapping noisily and her hull rising and falling in the choppy sea, awaited a fuller revelation of the whale's purpose.

This was not left long in doubt. Seeming to quicken his speed as he approached the vessel, the manifestly irate monster charged full at her bows, his massive head striking her just in front of the fore-chains with a shock that came within an ace of hurling Ralph off the main-truck, and tumbled headlong everybody on deck who did not happen at the moment to have hold of something. Captain Sampson's grip of the wheel alone saved him from being flung against the stern bulwark.

Instantly, there was great confusion on board, the captain shouting out orders, and the men,

temporarily panic-stricken, falling over one another in their dazed efforts to obey.

Realising that that most extraordinary, but not unparalleled, thing—a whale taking upon itself to attack a ship single-handed—had now happened, Captain Sampson sought to take refuge in flight, at the same time repaying his assailant, and if possible, frightening him off by a volley of deadly missiles. Accordingly, while some braced the yards, that the sails might catch the winds, others seized harpoons, lances, and even cutting-spades, and sprang to the bulwarks to be ready for the next onset.

They were not a moment too soon. Drawing off some distance so as to get up impetus, and evidently taking careful aim that he might not miss his mark, the whale, looking the very embodiment of sinister power, came on again, and in spite of the showers of harpoons, lances, and spades hurled at him, many of which found a lodgment in his head, he struck the ship another terrible blow.

Happily, it was not at the same spot as before, but further astern, else not even the stout timbers of the *Osprey* would have withstood him. Now Ralph, who had dropped down to the deck immediately after the first attack, while the others were snatching up the weapons lying nearest at hand, bethought himself of a musket, belonging to the blacksmith, that hung on the wall in their

little cabin. He knew it was loaded, as the owner had been amusing himself shooting seabirds with it a couple of days previously. Darting into the cabin he snatched it up, and reached the bulwarks just as the whale, seeming partially stunned by its second charge, was lying for a moment motionless.

Throwing the musket to his shoulder, he fired down into the vast bulk below him. The recoil of the old firearm knocked him back on to the deck, giving him a bump on the back of his head that made him see stars for a moment. But the shot did its work well, notwithstanding. Piercing far deeper than any of the harpoons or lances, it found its way right to the monster's heart, and, spouting up the dark thick blood which betokened nearing death, he made off with convulsive strokes of his mighty flukes.

No one on board, however, had any thought of taking advantage of his evident discomfiture. Their one concern was as to the extent of the injury he had done the vessel. Captain Sampson promptly gave orders to sound the well to see if there was any water in the hold, and to send up signals for the boats to return, as every man might be required to keep the ship afloat. Chips, the carpenter, having sounded, went to the captain with a very grave face, and reported that there was a foot of water already in the hold, and it was gaining rapidly.

Here, now, was a serious state of affairs. Full five hundred miles from land, and leaking so badly that only the vigorous use of the pumps could save the ship from sinking, it certainly looked as if the *Osprey* would have to pay dearly for her encounter with the giant whale.

The boats, two of which had been fast, but at sight of the recall signal had reluctantly cut their lines, came hurriedly back, their crews full of curiosity and concern as to what had happened.

"What's gone wrong, sir?" asked the chief-mate, who was the first over the bulwarks, of Captain Sampson, who stood on the quarter-deck, with a very moody expression of countenance.

For answer the captain pointed to the pumps, which, manned by as many sailors as could find room at the handles, were clanging furiously up and down, while the water flowed in frothing streams into the scuppers.

Mr. Houghton's countenance grew suddenly grave.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, "sprung a leak! and a bad one too by the looks of things. Have you any notion, sir, what did it, and where it lies?"

"That I have," responded the captain; and he proceeded to tell what had taken place, not omitting due credit to Ralph for his timely use of the musket.

"This may be a bad business for us," said Mr. Houghton, on coming to understand the whole matter. "I suppose, sir, we must make for the nearest land and have the ship examined."

"Such is my judgment, Mr. Houghton," assented the captain. "I trust there'll be no change of wind or weather until we reach a safe harbour. Come with me and let us determine our position."

By the aid of observations and the careful study of the chart, they made out that they were some four hundred and fifty miles distant from the New Hebrides group of islands, towards the southernmost of which, known as Aneytum, the *Osprey's* course was now directed.

It was an anxious time for all on board. Such examination of the ship's side as could be made revealed the fact that the whale's huge battering-ram of a head had inflicted serious injury below the water-line, which could be repaired only by the ship being careened, and in the meantime the incessant use of the pumps would be necessary to keep her afloat. Were a storm to spring up ere she reached a sheltered haven she was ill-fitted to face it, and her one chance lay in wind and wave favouring her to the utmost.

The effect of this appalling situation upon the various members of the crew was very striking in its difference. Some sang songs in ostentatious

hardihood ; others showed great depression of spirits, as if they already despaired of deliverance from their present danger ; yet others went about their work as though nothing out of the usual had occurred, and there was no anxiety upon their minds.

Ralph, when not taking his turn at the pumps, gave himself earnestly to prayer, seeking for this purpose the seclusion of his little cabin.

He was once thus engaged when the blacksmith came in hurriedly for something he wanted from his chest. He did not perceive Ralph at first, the cabin being rather dark, but when he did he instantly checked the sea-song he was humming, perhaps to keep his spirits up, and muttered, "Excuse me ; I didn't know what you were about."

Ralph, thus interrupted, rose to his feet, blushing warmly, and quite expecting some sneering fling at his action.

But, instead of this, the blacksmith, with a strange expression of countenance such as Ralph could not interpret, said in a husky voice that betrayed unwonted feeling, "I'm very sorry that I interrupted you. Go on praying, please," and hastened away, leaving Ralph greatly astonished at these unlooked-for words.

When he turned them over in his mind afterwards, he came to the conclusion that the black-

smith, and maybe the carpenter too, were not the rank sceptics that they made themselves out to be, but held in their hearts a deeper respect for the truth than they saw fit to admit, in which judgment, as it turned out, he was not very far astray.

The labour of the pumps was severe in the extreme, and taxed the strength of the entire crew. The watches were divided into half-hour shifts, and not even the chief-mate nor the captain himself claimed exemption from the exhausting toil.

To Ralph it was altogether new, and at first he found it tell upon him fearfully. Ere his spell was half through he would feel as if utterly incapable of another stroke, but, grinding his teeth and putting up a brief prayer for divine help, he would doggedly keep on, resolved rather to drop in sheer exhaustion than to let go of the pump handle.

Had the wind been favourable, the distance to Aneytum would have been traversed in a couple of days, but, unfortunately, it was light and baffling, and the glass gave indications of a change in the weather for the worse. Now, for a storm to strike the *Osprey* in her then condition would almost have inevitably meant her foundering, for the straining caused by her pitching and tossing in the billows would widen the leak already made by the whale beyond all possibility of the pumps meeting the inrush of water.

The situation, therefore, resolved itself to this. If the ship could only make a safe harbour before the storm broke, all might be well; but if she failed in this, and especially if the storm came from the north, thus driving her back upon her course, the chances were all against her surviving it.

It was wonderful the change wrought in the members of the crew by the nearness of a common peril. They all became strangely sober and thoughtful. No oaths were heard on the deck, no hot disputes, accompanied by volleys of foul language, disturbed the dense atmosphere of the foc'sle. Insensibly the men drew together, forgetting all their previous dislikes and disagreements, and there was nothing that Captain Sampson could have asked of them that they would not have sprung to do with instant alacrity.

This would have been the time to turn their attention to the great question of their relation to God had there been any of His servants present to seize the opportunity. Ralph realised the fact, but it was not for him to venture anything more than a word to Sakaio, with whom he had more than one talk on the maintop, in the intervals of their wearisome toil at the pump.

One evening, having just completed his turn, he was leaning over the bulwarks, regaining his breath, while he watched the waters gushing from the scup-

pers, when the chief-mate, who was on the quarter-deck, called him to come up to him.

"Do you wish you were safe on dry land now, Ralph?" he asked in a gentle, kindly tone, as he laid his hand on Ralph's shoulder.

Ralph looked up into his face a moment, before replying. Some such thought as Mr. Houghton suggested had been in his mind, but he had striven to put it away from him, as betraying undue nervousness and lack of faith in Providence, and he hesitated whether to frankly admit what he deemed his own weakness, or to give an evasive answer. He decided upon the latter course, and said with a depreciatory smile, "I'd like it very much better if the ship wasn't leaking, sir. It's no fun taking your turn at the pumps."

"Very nicely turned, Ralph," responded the chief-mate, giving his arm a pinch. "You didn't want to admit that the land was better than the sea under any circumstances, eh?"

Then changing his bantering tone to one more serious, he asked, "What does your religion do for you, Ralph, in such circumstances as the present?"

There was no mistaking the sincerity of the question. It was not inspired by scepticism, or the spirit of ridicule. It was the genuine inquiry of one who had been observing the youth's way of life for some time past with deep interest, and who

now sought to know how the faith he professed availed in the face of threatened death.

Ralph hesitated before replying, because he hardly knew just what to say. He did not suspect his questioner of any purpose to poke fun at him, but he was puzzled how to answer such a question to one who seemed so far above him in many ways.

Mr. Houghton, noticing his hesitation, said in a tone of kindly persuasion that was almost coaxing, "Don't be afraid to speak quite freely, Ralph. I am really in earnest."

Thus encouraged, Ralph opened his mind as he had never done to anybody before, telling his experience as if he were present in a Methodist class-meeting, and the chief-mate were his leader.

It was a simple story, simply told, but the veteran mariner listened with absorbed interest, and a moistening of the eyes that he would have been slow to admit to himself. He, too, had been brought up in a Christian home, but had wandered far from the path of life in which his parents trod, although he had never fallen into the gross vices whereby too many of those who do business upon the great waters make shipwreck of their lives.

From the very first he had been attracted by Ralph, for he had recognised in him what he might have been himself had he only been true to his home training. He had watched the young fellow

closely, and while not failing to note his faults and failings, had been satisfied of the genuineness of his religion and the general consistency of his life. "He's made of sterling stuff," he had said to himself, "and there's better work for him in this world than hunting whales."

Ralph, on his part, the ice once being broken, found it an unspeakable comfort thus to open his heart to one whom he so highly respected, and that long talk on the quarter-deck was ever memorable to him.

It was interrupted at last by Captain Sampson calling for the chief-mate to consult with him in his cabin, and as the latter went away he put his hands on Ralph's shoulders and said with deep feeling manifest in his voice, "I'm greatly obliged to you, Ralph."

That night the courage of those on board of the *Osprey* was tested to the utmost, for the gathering storm muttered and growled all about them, while the water poured in faster than ever as the vessel laboured heavily in the growing billows.

By daybreak, according to the captain's calculations, they ought to be off the island of Aneytum. But would the good ship keep afloat till then? That was the question which none could answer, and which wrung all hearts. As did those who with St. Paul were exposed to like danger, the *Osprey's* company "wished for the day" that they hoped would bring them deliverance.

CHAPTER XIV

UNTO THE DESIRED HAVEN

Not an eye was closed in slumber on board the *Osprey* during the night. When those who had done their turn at the pumps were relieved, they did not go below, but remained on deck taking such rest as they might on coils of rope or upon the hard planks of the deck.

Slowly the hours dragged by, while the sea became more violent, and the water gained upon the pumps in spite of the utmost efforts of the men. Ralph spent much time in prayer, for it seemed as though nothing but the interposition of Divine Providence could possibly prevent the ship from foundering.

The grey, bleak dawn found the *Osprey* still struggling bravely, although she lay so deep in the water that the waves easily swept over the bulwarks when she plunged into them.

Very haggard and anxious were the faces of the crew as they gazed eagerly in the direction where they hoped to see the longed-for land, and right

joyous, albeit hoarse and quavering, was the shout with which they greeted Sakaio's cry from the mainmast head of "Land ho! on the weather-bow!"

It could of course be naught else than the island of Aneytum which was just becoming discernible on the horizon, and hope grew strong in every heart that a haven would be reached ere the ocean had its will with the labouring ship.

Both wind and wave opposed the progress of the *Osprey* towards land, and the seamanship of Captain Sampson was taxed to the utmost to get any head-way at all out of his water-logged vessel. Happily there was not a captain in the whaling fleet to whom he need give place as to nautical knowledge, and in spite of all that was against him he gained a little in every tack, until at last shore showed plainly, and the question was just where to run in.

And now it was that to more than Ralph on board the *Osprey* there came the conviction of the value of prayer, for when Captain Sampson closely scrutinised the shore-line with his glass he gave a shout of joy.

"We've just hit it," he cried. "We've come to the very spot! We'll run right in there!"

And he pointed to a curving bay, whose waters, being sheltered from the wind by forest-covered hills in the rear, presented a welcome contrast in

their comparative stillness to the heaving billows through which the ship was heavily plunging.

Towards this haven all eyes were now turned, and with anxiety beyond the power of words to express, the men watched the slow progress of the ship. Little by little she staggered onward, rolling so deeply that it was evident she could not possibly keep afloat many hours more, no matter how the pumps might be worked. Presently the protecting influence of the island began to be felt. The wind did not smite the poor ship so fiercely, and the waves ran less violently.

"We'll make our safe harbour right enough, Ralph," said the chief-mate with a great sigh of relief. "And I say to you that I believe your prayers have helped us to it."

Ralph gave a glad smile, and said softly, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

"Yes, those are grand words," responded the chief-mate. "I never knew how much they meant before."

Reeling to and fro like some drunken creature, yet winning something at every lurch, the *Osprey* kept on until at last the shelter of the bay was reached, and she could run on an even keel.

"We must beach her, Mr. Houghton," said the captain, "and that seems about as good a spot as any."

The place indicated was a sloping sand-beach in front of a group of huts, which seemed larger and better than those usually built by the natives, and which Captain Sampson therefore hoped might belong to sandal-wood traders.

Steering straight for the huts, the ship kept on until with a soft shock she struck the sand, and ploughed her nose into it for some distance.

"Thank God!" ejaculated the captain fervently. "She's safe now, and we can put her to rights at our leisure."

There was great rejoicing among the crew at all danger being past. Not only so, but, without exception, they were pleased at the prospect of a lengthened visit to the land after their many months at sea.

It meant abundant supply of luscious fruit and cocoa-nuts, and of good fresh pork, which would be particularly grateful after an exclusive diet of salt beef and hard biscuit; and then, of course, there would be opportunities of rambling about the island, and having a good time generally. No one was more delighted than Ralph. Here was the chance to realise his cherished desire of seeing for himself an island of the South Seas and its people. With Sakaio for his companion he would rove all over the place if the natives were friendly, and there would be endless amusement in finding out the

beauties of nature, and the wonders of animal and bird life in this earthly paradise.

By the time the ship was aground the beach at her bow was thronged with natives, the men in the foreground, the women and children in the rear, and all manifesting lively interest at the advent of the big vessel.

Captain Sampson had never touched at Aneytum, and did not feel quite sure as to the character of the inhabitants. He accordingly gave orders that no one should attempt to land until he had reconnoitred somewhat, and, if possible, obtained from the natives the assurance of safety. He knew very well that they quite understood the hapless condition of his ship, and could make things extremely uncomfortable were they so disposed. It was therefore no small relief to him when he perceived, coming down towards the shore, a man whose whole appearance not only proclaimed him a representative of civilisation, but, more than that, of Christianity.

"Thank Heaven, they've got a missionary here!" he exclaimed. "We're all right now!"

No higher tribute to the glorious work accomplished by these holy men, whose feet were shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, could have been paid by one whose aim in life was altogether of the world worldly, and who had in times

past allowed himself to indulge in many a joke at the expense of the missionaries. The presence of one black-coated servant of God gave him a fuller sense of security than the company of another ship having as many men on board as the *Osprey*.

Ralph heard the words, and they filled him with joy and pride. "They won't make fun of religion any more, now," he said to himself, as he watched the missionary passing through the throng of natives, and receiving from them every sign of respect.

So soon as he perceived the missionary, Captain Sampson had ordered a boat to be lowered, and, entering it himself, he was rowed to the beach, whence he presently returned, bringing the man of God back with him.

There was great curiosity on board to see him, and the sailors gathered about the gangway, crowding one another in their eagerness to get a good look at him. At the first glance the impression he created could not be called other than disappointing. Even Ralph felt a certain chill come over his enthusiasm as there stepped on board a small, spare man, so dwarfed by the tall stalwart captain that he seemed almost insignificant.

"My eye, but he's a little chap!" came in a sort of stage whisper from the second-mate, a sturdy cockney who was apt to measure men by their physical rather than their mental qualities.

"I guess the islanders didn't eat him because his bones weren't worth the picking," added Lem Twining, a New Englander who aspired to some reputation as a humourist.

Meanwhile the missionary had reached the quarter-deck, and then, turning round, let his glance fall upon the group of men gathered in the waist of the ship.

"God bless you all, my friends," said he, in a voice so sweet and penetrating that it went straight to the hearts of his audience. "You can hardly realise how pleasant it is for me to see so many of my own countrymen."

That was all he said, but the effect upon the men was to work an instantaneous change in their opinion of him.

The thin face, deeply tanned by long exposure to the heat of a sub-tropical sun, was lit by a pair of large dark eyes which shone with a wonderful light of love, and the tender smile that curved the close-shaven lips lent a rare attractiveness to the otherwise homely countenance, while the broad forehead commanded respect by its manifestation of power. This was, indeed, not a man to be joked about, but one to be respected and loved, for he was evidently endowed with the noblest attributes of human nature.

Ralph's heart went out to him at once. He felt

impatient to make his acquaintance, and grudged the captain the privilege of having him all to himself in his cabin.

It was some time before they came out again, and then the missionary went about among the men, shaking hands cordially with each, and saying some pleasant words of greeting.

When he came to Ralph he held his hand for a little, as he said, "I hope you won't mind my saying that you seem to me unusually young to be engaged in this perilous business. Do you like it very much?"

Ralph blushed at the question, though it was put in a most kindly tone.

"Oh yes, sir," he responded, "I like it very much indeed. My father was captain of a whaler, and I always wanted to go to sea."

Still holding his hand, the missionary regarded him so intently that he seemed to be reading his mind through his eyes.

"You may think me very strange," he said gently, yet with a certain tone of conviction that impressed Ralph deeply, "but I believe you are destined for a nobler work than hunting whales. I hope we shall come to know one another ere long. For some reason you interest me deeply."

The missionary then pressed his hand warmly

and passed on, leaving Ralph in a state of much bewilderment.

Here was a perfect stranger looking upon him for the first time, and yet saying almost the same thing as the chief-mate had said a little while ago. It was certainly enough to set him thinking deeply, and to make him anxious for further talk with the man of God, who seemed to speak so positively about the future.

The missionary—whose name was the Rev. John Reddie—having assured Captain Sampson that the natives of that part of the island could be trusted implicitly, permission was granted for the crew to go ashore in detachments, one half of the men always remaining on board, and of the liberty thus granted it need hardly be said that they eagerly availed themselves.

Ralph and Sakaio were among the first to land, and it was very interesting to witness the almost childish delight of the South Sea Islander at once more setting foot upon his "native heath," so to speak, for although he was not a native of Aneytum, the island from which he came was much like it in many particulars, and not far distant to the north.

His first action was to bow down as though he would kiss the earth, then springing up and throwing his head back and his arms out, he executed a sort of dance, giving vent to strange guttural cries

that alarmed the natives so that they shrank back from him apprehensively. But the big fellow meant no harm to anybody. He was simply allowing play to his feelings, and, after flourishing about for a few minutes in this fashion, he wound up his performance with a wild whoop, and dashed off inland at the top of his speed.

Ralph, laughing so heartily that he could hardly get his breath, set off after him, and suddenly came upon him at the foot of a tall cocoa-nut tree, which he was evidently intending to climb.

"Hold on!" panted Ralph, "those nuts may belong to somebody. Don't go after them until we get permission."

But Sakaio was not to be checked by such counsel. Up he went with a speed that showed he had not forgotten his early accomplishments, and in a remarkably short time he had reached the spreading top where the nuts were to be had.

"Look out there below!" he shouted, and the next moment a fine big nut came tumbling down at Ralph's feet. Another, equally large, soon followed, and then being satisfied for the time, Sakaio descended himself.

He had just got to work at the husk of a nut with his sheath-knife, when there appeared upon the scene one of the natives in a high state of indignation. Precisely what he was saying neither

Ralph nor Sakaio could make out, but he was manifestly much excited, and no doubt was protesting against this unwarrantable trespass on his property.

Ralph felt rather anxious, and endeavoured to pacify the native by pointing to the *Osprey*, and saying in a very loud tone that they came from the ship, and would pay well for whatever cocoanuts they took. This, however, failed of any effect, and Sakaio, taking no more notice of the irate proprietor than if he were a mosquito buzzing at his ear, went on stripping the nut until a crowd gathered about, whose looks and movements seemed ominous of mischief.

Then the harpooneer, awaking to the situation, suspended operations, while with an expressive smile upon his countenance, he went through a pantomime which evidently reached the comprehension of the natives. The dark scowls left their faces, their eyes shone with a kindly gleam, and the crowd melted away again, leaving the owner of the tree to settle with the harpooneer for the value of the nuts, which he did very easily by giving him a brass ring he had on one of his fingers.

Having had a most refreshing drink of cocoa-nut milk, and eaten a good part of the succulent, snow-white meat, Ralph and Sakaio continued their walk

inland. The harpooneer was in wonderful spirits, and strode away at such a rate that his companion, after a vain effort to keep pace with him, was fain to cry for mercy, and to secure an abatement of their speed.

Proceeding more leisurely, they had time to look about them, and Ralph, who, until he went on board the *Osprey*, had never been out of New England, where the soil submits so grudgingly to the labour of the husbandman, was filled with astonishment and delight at the prodigality of Nature, in this isle where perpetual summer reigned.

In the first place, the scenery itself was beautiful beyond description. Being of volcanic origin, the island presented in little space a remarkable variety of sharp-peaked mountains, gently-undulating plains, and deep valleys fairly smothered in foliage and verdure.

This natural beauty, however, would not in itself have so roused Ralph's enthusiasm: it was the boundless profusion of fruit and flowers that appealed to him most strongly. The cocoa-nut palm, the bread-fruit tree, the banana plant, were to be seen on every side, while sugar-cane, wild figs, chestnuts, and rose-apple grew freely of their own accord, and in the pretty little plantations set out by the inhabitants, melons, citrons, pine-apples, oranges and guava flourished in tempting abundance.

The involuntary visit of the *Osprey* had been made towards the close of the wet season, when Nature was at her best, and her luscious products were ripening for use, and, seeing how particularly welcome they were to those who had been for months subsisting on salt beef and hard biscuit, it was not surprising that Ralph, after Sakio had revealed to him the toothsome riches of the island of plenty, should exclaim—

"Oh, what a Paradise of a place! I believe I'd like to stay here for a year."



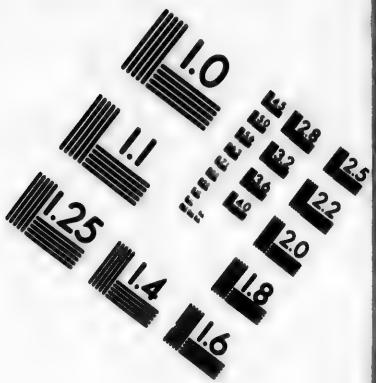
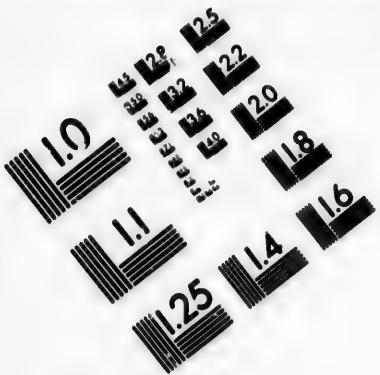
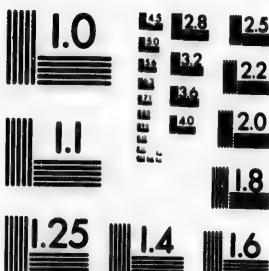
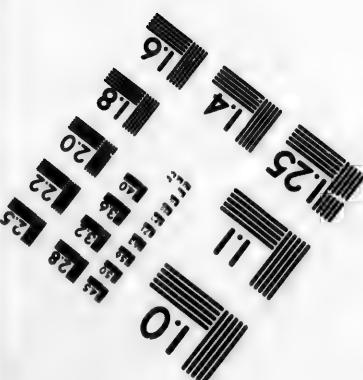
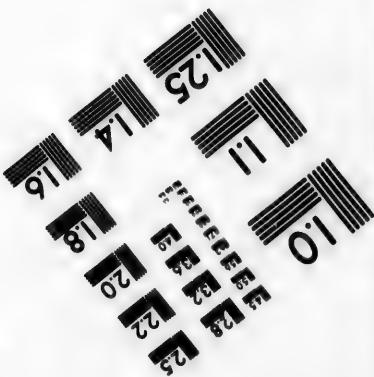


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CHAPTER XV

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION

A CAREFUL examination of the *Osprey* showed that the whale had done her serious harm, and that in order to properly repair the damage it would be necessary to careen her. This was bound to be a difficult and toilsome job, but Captain Sampson set about it with a resolute cheerfulness that exhibited the sturdy spirit of the man.

First of all the ship had to be lightened. As time was of more importance than expense, the natives were called upon for their assistance, payment being made in the form of salt, biscuit, scraps of metal, and other things dear to the savage heart. A couple of hundred men, young and old, were thus enlisted for the work, and the beach presented a scene of lively bustle and well-organised activity as the ship's hold was emptied of its contents, and everything stripped off her that would reduce her weight.

On being taken ashore the goods and articles were arranged in piles above high-water mark, and

covered with canvas and tarpaulin to protect them from the sun and rain. It was also deemed expedient to protect them from human as well as elemental assaults, and accordingly three men were detailed to mount guard at night lest there should be something missing in the morning.

Ralph, of course, had to take his turn at this with the others, and it chanced that the very first night he was on duty one of the tremendous hurricanes peculiar to the latitude fell upon the island. There was no notwithstanding its violence, and so for protection those on guard, Ralph included, crept under the tarpaulin out of reach of the wind and rain. For some time the hurricane raged so terrifically, that not only were many of the coverings stripped from the piles of stuff, but it really seemed as if the heavy articles themselves would be lifted up and carried off into the sea. The tarpaulin beneath which Ralph had taken shelter was one of those torn off by the wind, and he was left exposed to the full fury of the storm.

He was cowering under the lee of the pile, making the most of such slight protection as it afforded, when he thought he saw a figure creeping stealthily towards the heap which was composed of the spare spars and rigging, together with the outfits of the whale-boats. There was much in this heap in the way of metal and cordage which the

savages coveted, and many a longing glance had been given it by the natives as during the day they hovered in the vicinity. Ralph's suspicions were at once aroused. What he saw was evidently one of the islanders who, with felonious intent, was prowling about the *Osprey's* stores.

"That fellow's going to steal something if he can," said Ralph to himself, "and I'm not going to let him if I can help it."

If he had known where his two fellow-sentinels were he would have given the alarm, but when the tarpaulin blew away they had sought other nooks, and in the darkness and confusion of the warring elements he had no idea as to their position. It was no use calling out, for he would not have been audible five feet away, so he determined to tackle the man on his own account.

He accordingly executed a flank movement which brought him behind the native, and then, just as he was about to lay hold of some article, he rushed upon him, shouting, "Drop that, and be off with you. You can't steal anything here."

He had relied upon the islander being so taken by surprise as to offer little or no resistance, and to make off as fast as his legs would carry him; but he soon found that he had counted without his host, for, instead of skedaddling, the fellow sprang to his feet, and threw himself upon Ralph,

grappling him tight, and forcing him backward to the ground.

At this Ralph roared out lustily for help, and would doubtless have made himself heard by the other two watchers had not the savage taken him by the throat and throttled him into insensibility. How long he lay thus helpless he could not tell, but after a while the rain beating upon his upturned face brought back his senses, and, with brain much bewildered by what had happened, he tried to get on his feet, murmuring, "Oh, how my throat hurts! That villain nearly killed me!"

Having no idea as to whether the midnight murderer was alone, or had accomplices who might be equally dangerous, Ralph now felt very anxious to find his companions. So he began a search for them under the tarpaulin, which presently resulted in his finding them in a snug, well-protected nook, sound asleep.

"Ahoy there! Wake up!" he cried huskily; for it seemed as if his poor throat had been squeezed out of shape by the savage's powerful fingers. "They're trying to steal things," and he proceeded to pull at the sleepers' arms.

He soon had them both awake, and in a high state of indignation at the daring rascality of the natives; but a diligent search among all the stuff brought to light no other intruders, and there was

nothing to do but to wait until daylight in order to ascertain what had been stolen.

Ralph's throat was very sore. Indeed he bore the marks of the savage's fingers for many days, but when in the morning he found, close to where he had grappled with the fellow, an ugly-looking spear one thrust from which would easily have ended his life, he felt thankful that nothing worse had befallen him.

Captain Sampson praised him warmly for his plucky attempt to arrest the robber, and was glad to get the spear, as it might lead to the identification of the rascal. On consulting with Mr. Reddie, however, he became satisfied that the offender did not belong to any of the villages near by, but must have come down from the mountains in the interior where it would be impossible to follow him, and so all thought of retribution had to be given up.

It was a big job careening the *Osprey*, in order that the damaged place might be readily got at, and until that was accomplished and the carpenter could begin his part of the work, there was not much leisure for anybody. When, however, the ship had been with great toil put in the desired position, there was a temporary respite for all who could not help the carpenter at his job. This set Ralph free, and he employed his liberty in becom-

ing acquainted with the missionary and the work that he was doing on this island.

As he came to understand Mr. Reddie's position, the admiration he had felt for him from the first deepened into positive reverence, and he came to look upon him as a hero worthy of the highest honour. It certainly showed wonderful courage, no less than complete consecration to God, that this little man, whose spare frame and thin sharp face betokened a slight physical endowment, should be so inspired by love for the souls of the heathen that he would, by his own exertions, originate and organise a missionary society in Nova Scotia, tens of thousands of miles away, that might send him among the cannibals with no other protection than the Gospel of Peace.

"What a brave man you must be!" Ralph exclaimed enthusiastically, as Mr. Reddie simply yet eloquently described some of the thrilling experiences through which he had passed. "No soldier on the battle-field ever needed more courage than you do, to stay here with such danger around you."

"Well, we are all soldiers, you know, Ralph," said the missionary, smiling at his earnestness, "although we do not fight with carnal weapons. What is this world but a battle-field upon which we must ever wage war against the prince of the

power of the air, who would work our destruction if not opposed and thwarted by those who are enrolled under the banner of the Prince of Peace?"

Ralph's eyes kindled, and his face flushed at the missionary's stirring words. They presented a view of the Christian life that appealed to his vigorous spirit, and awakened new thoughts within him which were destined to take shape in definite action. Except his own family, Mr. Reddie was alone upon the island, although he was hoping that the Society which had sent him out would ere long send a second missionary who would aid him in his heroic undertaking.

Ralph was no less attracted by the missionary's wife than by the man himself. She was a sweet, otherly woman, who entered heart and soul into her husband's work, teaching the native women and children to read and sew, and holding a Sunday-school in which they learned about their Saviour.

She, on her part, took a deep interest in Ralph from their first meeting. This was in a manner due to her having had to send her own son, the only boy, although there were several daughters, back to Nova Scotia, in order that he might be educated away from the demoralising influences of heathenism. Ralph was considerably older than her son, but he was still boyish enough in his ways to remind her of him, and her heart went out to

him warmly on this account, as well as because she liked him for himself.

The missionary's library was at best a scanty one, but Ralph found in it several books he was glad to get hold of, and which he greatly enjoyed reading. Thus the days went by pleasantly, while the repairs of the ship were making good progress, and the time was drawing near when the *Osprey* would take her departure from Aneytum.

The Sunday services were of great interest to Ralph. With the help of the natives, Mr. Reddie had constructed a little church, thirty feet in length by fifteen in breadth, a wattled and plastered affair with a wooden frame, which was certainly not in any way imposing, but which served the purpose for the present. In this he held preaching services in the morning and afternoon of the Sabbath, and a good many of the *Osprey's* company were glad to attend, Mr. Houghton and Sakaio being among the number.

As Ralph looked over the little congregation of natives, the wonder of the scene impressed him deeply. Here were men who, from time immemorial, had been prone to such atrocities as infanticide, the strangling of widows, and cannibalism, and who, until the advent of the missionary, had gone about in absolute nakedness, sitting quietly and decently, listening with manifest attention to

the word of God preached by one who had come from the other side of the world to save them from eternal ruin.

Little by little, Ralph was coming to take a different view of life. To attain the highest place possible in his chosen pursuit, to be captain of a finer ship, maybe, than the *Osprey*, and, after years of adventurous voyaging, to settle down in New Bedford or in Boston, and enjoy a well-earned leisure in his old age — such was the dream in which he had indulged when alone on the main-top of the *Osprey* in mid-ocean. But the more he was in the missionary's company, the more strongly he felt that this was after all a low ideal of life, and a long talk he had with Mr. Reddie, one evening as they sat together upon the cliff-edge overlooking the sea, had much to do in bringing him to cherish a loftier ideal.

Mr. Reddie had been asking him some questions about his boyhood at home, and why he had taken to the sea.

"You must be brought into contact with many things that are unpleasant and uncongenial, I should think," he said, regarding Ralph intently. "Do you not sometimes find it hard to hold your own against the temptations that beset you?"

"Yes, I do," responded Ralph frankly. "Most of the sailors are rough chaps, and they don't take

much thought for a fellow's feelings ; but they're not bad after all, and they've been mighty good to me ever since I've been aboard."

"I can quite understand that," said Mr. Reddie with a meaning smile, which gave Ralph a pleasant thrill. Then, after a moment's silence, he put his hand upon Ralph's, which lay upon his knee, and said in a low, gentle voice, as though he were thinking aloud, "But are you quite content, Ralph, to look forward to spending your life at whaling ?"

Ralph felt the colour mounting to his forehead. A week ago he would have answered the question promptly and decidedly in the affirmative. But now there was something within him that made him pause, for it was no longer true that he would be content to be a whalesman all his days, although he had by no means reached a conclusion as to what other occupation he would put in its place.

"I don't know, sir," he replied in a hesitating way. "I don't think I would altogether. I'm not so wild about it now as I was at the first. Do you think it wouldn't be best for me to stick to it ?"

It was rather a home question, as it threw upon Mr. Reddie the responsibility of a reply from the standpoint of an adviser, and this he had not

contemplated. But he accepted the challenge, if so it might be called, and replied:

"Yes, Ralph, I do think it would not be best for you to stick to whaling all your life. I have known you only a little while, but the more I see of you, the more I am convinced that you are fitted for higher work, and now that we are speaking thus freely to one another, I will tell you just what is in my heart.

"I am alone here as you see. Although I have asked for a second missionary to be sent, my request has not yet been granted, and the work is suffering because I need assistance. There is so much to be done in every direction. Now it has been borne upon my mind that you may be the one providentially sent to join me in this difficult but glorious work, for a time at least."

"I!" exclaimed Ralph, turning around and looking intently into the missionary's face; "could I be of any help to you?"

"Of course you could, Ralph, in many ways," responded Mr. Reddie. "Your company would be a great comfort in the first place, and then you could assist me in the printing of the New Testament, which I have been toiling at for some time, and when you have learnt the language, you can tell the gospel to the natives."

Ralph sat in silence for some moments, while his

brain was busy with thronging thoughts. The missionary's words did not take him entirely by surprise, because in his own mind some similar ideas had been finding lodgment, although they seemed little more than mere fancies.

As he did not speak, Mr. Reddie went on—

"I was working it out in my own mind somewhat in this way, Ralph. I thought that if Captain Sampson did not object, you might remain here when the ship goes, and make a trial of the matter. Captain Sampson tells me that he intends to spend another year at least in the southern cruising-grounds, as he is not going back until his ship is full. He could therefore call back for you on his way home, and by that time your mind would be perfectly clear as to where your duty lay. What do you think about it, Ralph?"

Ralph did not know just what to think about it at the moment. He felt that he would like to consult Mr. Houghton, and to seek guidance from above.

Mr. Reddie agreed with him that this would be wise and proper, and so they parted with this understanding, the missionary saying, as Ralph turned toward the beach: "I shall pray that you may decide to remain, Ralph, for I believe God's hand is in it."

CHAPTER XVI

A CHANGED CAREER

IT was not until the following evening that Ralph had an opportunity of speaking to the chief-mate with regard to Mr. Reddie's proposition. The day had been one of strenuous activity, its main business having been to warp the *Osprey*, now thoroughly repaired, off into deep water—a tiresome job, and one demanding the utmost exertions on the part of all who could be enlisted for it. But it had been successfully accomplished, and now with a great load off his mind, Mr. Houghton was enjoying his evening pipe and a stroll along the beach when Ralph came up to him.

"May I speak to you, sir?" he said, touching his cap respectfully.

"Why certainly, Ralph," responded the chief-mate cordially. "Fire away—I'm all attention."

Ralph then proceeded to repeat his conversation with the missionary, winding up with the question, "Now, what do you think I had better do?"

Mr. Houghton pulled at his pipe thoughtfully

for a moment, and then looking full into Ralph's face, asked, "What do you think yourself, Ralph?"

Ralph laughed as he answered, "I'm not just quite sure, and that's the reason I wanted your advice."

"Well, Ralph," was the reply, "I suppose you have not forgotten the little talk we had some time ago, in which I took upon myself to predict that you would not stick to whaling, or at least that it would be a pity if you did."

Ralph nodded assent, and the chief-mate went on—

"I had no notion then as to what might be the change in your life-plan, but I felt sure it was bound to come, and now it seems as if the missionary has made the whole thing clear. You could not have a better chance to try yourself, and see whether you are suited to the grand good work that he is doing. For my own part I believe you are; but if you find out you are not, then you can come back to the ship and take your place again just as before."

As Mr. Houghton was speaking, Ralph's mind went with him, and by the time he had finished, it was quite made up.

"All right, then, sir," he said with a brisk air of decision, and a feeling of relief that the matter was settled. "I'll do as you say. That is, of

course, if Captain Sampson will let me go. If he refuses, I suppose I'll have to stay on board."

"Make your mind easy about that, Ralph," responded the chief-mate. "I'll speak to the Captain myself, and I feel sure I'll get him to agree to let you stay with Mr. Reddie."

Ralph thanked him warmly for undertaking this, and as they walked back to the ship his heart was lighter than it had been for days past. All indecision had vanished from his mind. The way seemed clear and straight before him, and he began to entertain pleasant anticipations of his life with the missionary.

The chief-mate had more difficulty in winning Captain Sampson over than he expected. The veteran whalesman held a very exalted opinion of his vocation, and was not disposed to admit that even missionary work was a worthier employment.

"You're like to spoil a good whalesman for the sake of making a poor missionary," he growled. "The lad's too young, at any rate. He doesn't know his own mind yet. It'll be time enough ten years hence for him to go into this thing."

But Mr. Houghton held firm, and in the end Captain Sampson gave a grudging assent. As soon as Ralph heard of this he hurried off to Mr. Reddie, his beaming face anticipating what he had to tell.

He met the missionary returning from a visit to

a native who was ill of a fever, and in his impulsive way he ran up to him and caught his hand, exclaiming, "It's all settled, Mr. Reddie. Captain Sampson agreed to my staying with you, and I'm so glad."

Mr. Reddie's eyes glistened with tears of joy. "God be thanked!" he murmured, looking up to heaven. "My prayer is answered. I cannot tell you, Ralph, how glad *I* am."

They went on to the house, where Mrs. Reddie received the news with joy, and then they sat down to dinner, which happened to be just ready, and talked over the plans and prospects for the future.

There were many sincere regrets on board the *Osprey* at Ralph's leaving the ship. He had come to be liked and respected by all, and of course there were few who did not think he was doing an absurd thing to give up his chance of making his fortune at whaling for the sake of doing missionary work among a lot of naked savages.

Mr. Houghton would miss him greatly, for he had grown really fond of him. But of them all none felt more deeply than Sakaio. The big harpooneer loved Ralph with all the strength of his heart, and the idea of parting from him made him so unhappy that he was more than half inclined to leave the ship too and remain at Aneytum. But the chief-mate reasoned him out of this, and he was fain to be content with the hope that when

the *Osprey* returned Ralph would come back to her, or that he would stay with Ralph on the island. In the meantime he promised to keep up reading the Bible, Mr. Houghton having kindly undertaken Ralph's place as teacher.

Quite clear in his own mind, as he felt, Ralph nevertheless could not see the good ship spread her swelling canvas and sail away out on to the ocean, leaving him behind, without a certain sinking of the heart and sense of loneliness which not even the presence of the missionary availed to overcome. The *Osprey* had been his home long enough for him to become warmly attached to her company. It was no easy thing for him to bid them all good-bye, in order to enter upon a mode of life so entirely different from anything he had ever known before.

Not wishing to let Mr. Reddie see how deeply the parting with his former associates affected him, he went off by himself to the top of a hill whence there was a clear view far out to sea, and thence he watched the white wings of the *Osprey* gradually lessening, until at last they dipped below the horizon.

"God bless you all, and keep you from danger and death!" he prayed, with his eyes fixed upon the spot where the ship had vanished.

Then, straightening himself up and setting his

lips firmly, he added, "And now for my new life! Lord, help me to be some good!"

Returning to the missionary's house, he found Mr. and Mrs. Reddie awaiting him with cordial smiles.

"We've been trying to get your room ready for you," said Mrs. Reddie; "but as we were not sure just how you would want your things arranged, we thought we had better wait until you could show us."

Captain Sampson had been very liberal with Ralph in the matter of an outfit. Besides paying him well for his services on board the *Osprey*—a thing he was not bound to do, as Ralph was really entitled to no wages until the end of the voyage—he had presented him with a good supply of medicines, an excellent musket, and abundance of ammunition.

"You may need this in the worst way some time," he said, with a sage look, as he put the musket into his hand; and Ralph thanked him warmly, for even though he should never have to use it as a weapon of defence, it would be certain to be useful in hunting. The chief-mate gave him a pistol and a set of fishing-lines and hooks; Sakaio presented one of his own harpoons, saying that he could practise using it until the ship came back for him. Others made him little presents

such as they were able, the carpenter and blacksmith both contributing to the list, the first giving an excellent axe, and the second a good hammer. Altogether Ralph had quite a collection of very useful articles, and never felt so well off before.

His room was such a small one—for the missionary's house was far from being a spacious mansion—that it required some management to get everything comfortably stowed away in it, and Mr. Reddie said laughingly : " We'll have to build you a cottage for yourself, Ralph, so that you may have room for all your possessions."

Ralph, whose spirits were now completely restored, chuckled at the suggestion.

" I'd like that first-rate, if it wouldn't be too much trouble," he replied.

" Very good, then," returned Mr. Reddie ; " we'll see about it as soon as possible."

It did not take Ralph long to become as much at home in the missionary's household as though he had always been a member of it. His was a nature that quickly adjusted itself to new surroundings, and from the very outset he found no lack of employment for all his energies, so that the time never hung heavy upon his hands.

Mr. Reddie had been just a year upon the island, and although there were grounds for encouragement

as to the ultimate success of the work, the present position of affairs was by no means as satisfactory as it might be.

Aneytum, the most southerly of the New Hebrides group, was not a large island, being only about forty miles in circumference, but it was very mountainous in character, and in the interior rose to a height of three thousand feet above the level of the sea, so that it was visible from a great distance. The high lands which formed its centre were in many places cleft by fertile valleys, down whose sloping sides leaped and splashed numberless waterfalls, while between the hills and the sea lay a girdle of table-land upon which the natives set out their plantations, and with little difficulty raised all that was necessary for their support.

The feature that distinguished Aneytum from the other islands of that group was its splendid harbour, formed by a coral reef about a mile and a half from the shore, which afforded ample protection from wind and wave, and yet left spacious anchorage for the largest ships.

Mr. Reddie had wisely chosen an elevated spot on the shore, just opposite the reef, for the site of his mission station. There was no other good landing-place on his island, and consequently all vessels calling there would be bound to anchor in front of his door, so to speak, where he would have

the full benefit of their company so long as they remained.

The station consisted of the missionary's own house, the frame of which he had brought from Samoa, a very modest edifice, wattled and plastered, and thatched with the leaf of the sugar-cane; the chapel, which was about the same size and of the same construction; and the third building used in part as a storehouse and in part as a printing-office.

The buildings were ranged in line along the table-land, at some little distance from the sea, thus securing a dry and airy site. They were entirely unprotected; no stockade surrounded them, nor were they sufficiently strong to withstand any vigorous assault; neither had the missionary anything in the way of firearms or other weapon—the Almighty God was his protection, the Gospel of love his only weapon, and he asked nothing more.

Ralph's first work was to master the business of printing, Mr. Reddie being very anxious to get some sheets of alphabets, syllables, and words for those who were attending the school, taught by himself and his wife. He had an excellent little printing-press, procured in the United States, and had already settled upon an alphabet of twenty-one letters to represent the different sounds of the language.

To this work of printing Ralph set himself with great ardour. The language was not a difficult one to learn, and, having the faculty of quickly acquiring another tongue, he made rapid progress with Mr. Reddie's assistance.

Besides working at the press—which, of course, was only a small hand affair, requiring careful management, and permitting of but slow progress—he gave what help he could in the school, teaching others while he was learning himself. Mr. Reddie was delighted with his assiduity and rapid progress.

"You were surely destined by Providence for this work, Ralph," said he. "I cannot be sufficiently grateful to God for sending you to me. Many a time has my heart been heavy with loneliness, and I have worried over the things that ought to be done, but which I could not undertake because I was alone. Now that I have your companionship and help, it will be very different."

The better acquainted with the natives Ralph became, the more interested in them he grew. They were not unprepossessing in appearance, being of medium size, well built, and inclined to stoutness. Their skin was a very dark brown, like the colour of an old copper coin, and their hair, which had the same tint, was coarse and abundant.

Contrary to the order of Nature as well as the

letter of Scripture, the men wore their hair long, while the women cropped theirs short. Ralph was much amused by the evident pride the men took in their hair, and the great pains they were at to decorate it after their own fashion. They would divide it into a number of very small locks, and wind each one round from the root to about two inches of the end with the thin rind of a plant, giving it much the appearance of a piece of twine. It was then covered with a kind of red paint, the result being as ugly as it was extraordinary. As the hair grew, the winding process was continued. Mr. Reddie told Ralph that he had counted as many as seven hundred of these locks upon one head.

Another no less hideous practice was the boring of the ears and nose, and the insertion of pieces of shell and wood in the holes. Men of rank were distinguished by having the holes of their ears filled with tortoise-shell rings, some of which were more than an inch in width, and full ten inches in circumference.

Painting the face prevailed among all classes and both sexes, the favourite colours being black and red. There were no special patterns of fashionable designs; each person bedaubed himself or herself according to individual fancy. One would paint the right cheek black and the left red, another

would put red on the upper part of the face and black on the lower, while a third would go in for stripes.

The men went mostly naked, but the women wore girdles of the pandanus leaf, reaching from the waist to the knee.

Such were the people—savages still for the most part under the thraldom of the most debasing superstition, and by no means cured of child-murder, human sacrifice, and cannibalism—with whom Ralph had cast in his lot, in obedience to what he felt to be the direct leading of Providence.

CHAPTER XVII

ANEYTUM ADVENTURES

THE Reddie household, in spite of the many dangers and difficulties surrounding it, was a very happy one, and Ralph found the company of the mother and the little children peculiarly delightful, after having been so long confined to the society of men.

Mrs. Reddie was one of those brave, cheerful souls who, without being blind or deaf to the troubles and trials of life, yet manage to meet them with a serene front, and to preserve a calm outward appearance, however their hearts may be wrung. Her eldest daughter had been sent to Australia, to be educated away from the harmful surroundings of savagery, and but two little girls remained at home, and Ralph soon established himself high in their graces. They were the constant companions of his leisure, and he took great pleasure in telling them stories of his life on land and at sea, which they keenly relished.

A favourite amusement of his was going sailing in a large canoe which Mr. Reddie owned, and

which was an excellent craft of its kind. He soon became very expert in its management, and did not hesitate to take runs out beyond the reef into the open sea.

On these occasions he always had with him a young native about his own age, named Namuri, to whom he had taken a strong liking, for he was an intelligent fellow, with a frank, pleasant face, and gentle manners. He had taught Namuri to help him in the handling of the canoe, and they got on capitally together.

One afternoon they took the two little girls out with them, and, the breeze being favourable, they went some distance along the coast. On their return the breeze freshened so considerably that the management of the canoe called for the utmost of Ralph's skill and strength. But he did not feel at all alarmed, being quite confident of his ability to make the mission station all right.

As for the girls, Mary and Martha, they thought it all fine fun. The careening of the canoe until the water rushed over the side at such a rate that Namuri had to bale unceasingly, the straining of the sail as the wind sought to tear it from the mast, the hissing of the foam-topped waves that raced beside the canoe, and the quick movements of Ralph as he worked the tiller and tended the sheets at the same moment—all these things were very inter-

resting to the innocent youngsters, who clapped their hands and laughed gleefully at the very moment when, if they only knew it, they were most in peril.

But Ralph took care that they should not be undeceived, although, as the wind strengthened into a small gale, he began to wish they were safe within the reef again.

"Isn't it grand, girls?" he exclaimed, with a joyous smile. "You never had a sail like this before, had you?" adding to himself, "and you never will again as far as I am concerned."

On went the canoe, leaping and plunging over the waves, fast swelling into billows, with an airy grace which no white man's boat could imitate. Engrossed as he was in keeping the light craft from capsizing, Ralph could not help admiring the wonderful buoyancy and the life-like way in which it sprang over the foaming surges. Namuri showed no signs of fear, but baled away vigorously. Indeed, had he not done so, the canoe would soon have been swamped.

The struggle between the power of the elements and that of the two young men was certainly a thrilling one, and had there been other spectators than the guileless girls, they could not have failed to feel intensely excited over it.

There were two anxious watchers on the shore,

it is true, but they, of course, had not come within their range of vision.

For nearly an hour the battle went on, and both Ralph and Namuri were beginning to feel that their strength was being overtaxed, when the canoe rounded the point which shut out from it the mission harbour.

"Hurrah!" cried Ralph exultantly. "We're all right now. Keep still, girls, and we'll soon be home."

But he had spoken too soon, for their perils were not yet over. They had got inside the reef, where the waves were not so boisterous, and they would soon be in comparatively calm water, when little Mary, happening to make a move just when the canoe gave a sudden lurch, lost her balance, and with a pitiful cry of "Ralph, catch me! catch me!" fell into the sea.

Instantly Ralph shouted to Namuri, "Here, take the tiller; I'm going after her," and plunged into the waves. A few strong strokes brought him beside the child, and so light was she that even in that troubled sea he had little difficulty in keeping her afloat.

But how was the canoe to be regained?

The moment it had been left to itself it had paid off before the wind, and was already some distance away, while Namuri had not enough know-

ledge of sailing to bring it back. Realising this, Ralph resolved to try and reach the reef, for although the billows were breaking over it, still he might get a foothold upon it, which he could retain until help came from the shore, where the accident had perhaps already been perceived.

Bidding Mary keep very still, and not cling to him too tightly, he struck out for the reef. It was hard work in that rough water, and progress was slow, but he prayed as he toiled, adding stroke to stroke, although his strength was going fast, and finally his feet touched the coral.

Breathing a fervent "Thank God!" he secured his footing, and gathered the little girl in his arms. She was so still and white that he feared she might be dead. But she had only fainted, and even while he held her there, the colour began to return to her cheeks and the breath to her lips.

What Ralph had reached was not the main reef, but a mere patch of coral rising perpendicularly out of the deep water, and having about three feet of water upon it.

It was not easy to preserve his position upon it with such a helpless burden in his arms, and he looked anxiously towards the canoe, with which Namuri had been struggling desperately. More by good luck than by good management the native had succeeded in bringing it about without cap-

sizing it, and was now bearing down upon Ralph in fine style. If he could only keep right on the course he was now steering he would come within Ralph's reach, and so the latter shouted out encouragingly: "That's the way, Namuri! Keep as you're going, and you'll pick us up all right!"

On came the canoe, with Namuri holding the tiller hard, and little Martha crouched in the bow, gazing anxiously ahead. So straight did it steer for Ralph that it must infallibly have struck him and knocked him off the coral had he not dexterously evaded its charge, and, throwing Mary over the side, sprung in after her ere it had shot past.

Once back on board he was quickly master of the situation. The canoe was again put about and pointed for the shore, which it presently reached without further mishap, and where Mr. and Mrs. Reddie awaited it, thanking God for the deliverance of their darling.

After this adventure Ralph was more cautious, and although he often took the girls out with him when he was not going beyond the confines of the harbour, he always left them behind when he intended venturing farther.

The longer he was on the island the more clearly he saw how little impression had yet been made upon the mass of savagery surrounding the mis-

sionary station. The natives were like children, and very badly brought-up children at that. They did not know their own minds for any length of time, and were prone to spells of superstitious fear, and storms of passion, in the course of which they were liable to sweep the brave missionary and his family out of existence.

The week after the departure of the *Osprey* Ralph had an experience that taught him the need of being more careful in future.

The objects of heathen worship on Aneytum were the Natmasses, which were both inanimate objects and living creatures. Neugerain, the chief Natmass, was credited with being the creator of the island, the tradition being that once when he was fishing he found something very heavy on his hook, and on pulling it up it proved to be Aneytum. The supremacy of this deity was acknowledged throughout the whole island, and he was held in such dread reverence that, as the Hebrews of old would not speak the name of Jehovah, so these islanders would not mention their chief Natmass.

Next in rank to him came a variety of Natmasses who, though inferior in dignity, were invested with supernatural power. They were supposed to take part with Neugerain in the production of various things. Thus one was sup-

posed to be the creator of pigs, another of fish, another of cocoa-nuts, another of bananas, and so on.

Besides these Natmasses which had no bodily form or substance, the natives had idols which they regarded with religious veneration. They were usually of stone, not especially carved or in any way to be distinguished from a common stone, except that they had a small chip broken off as a place of ingress and egress for the spirits that were supposed to inhabit them.

Still a third class of objects of worship were certain living creatures. Divine honours were paid to a sort of serpent that lurked among the crevices of the rocks on the sea-shore. It was as much like an eel as a serpent, and had a white and black spotted skin.

While sauntering along the beach, one day, Ralph spied one of these reptiles, and knowing nothing at the time of its sacred character, the instinct to kill anything of the serpent kind, which is so strong in us all, impelled him to give chase with a stick. The creature was nearly four feet long, but moved so slowly that he soon caught up with it, and was just about to strike it upon the head with his club when a big native rushed up, his countenance expressing both consternation and wrath, and vociferating something that Ralph did

not understand, placed himself between him and the serpent.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Ralph, making as though he would push the man aside, for he was provoked by the interference. "Get out of the way, and let me kill the hateful thing."

But, instead of obeying, the native, looking more angry than at first, raised the stick he held in his hand so threateningly that Ralph was fain to put up his own to ward off the expected blow. The two were thus standing face to face, while the reptile was making its escape, when a number of other men hastened up, to whom the native explained the situation with immense volubility and vigour. Instantly there was a great hubbub, and Ralph, to his alarm, found himself surrounded by a crowd of savages whose menacing looks and excited actions showed him to be in imminent danger of personal violence.

"What's the matter?" he inquired, looking from one to another. "What harm have I done?"

But none of them understood his words, and he could get no clue from them as to the cause of their anger.

The situation was rapidly becoming critical, for the more the men talked together the more indignant they became, and already they were raising

their clubs to let them fall upon poor Ralph's head, when Mr. Reddie appeared upon the scene, and forcing his way through the circle that surrounded Ralph, placed himself at his side, and asked to be told what all the trouble was about. There was such a babble of tongues in response that nothing was intelligible, so, at the first moment of silence, he suggested that only one should speak at a time.

The man who had first accosted Ralph was then designated as spokesman, and proceeded with dramatic gesture and lively play of features to state Ralph's cause of offence.

When the missionary heard it he looked very grave, and after saying a few words in a conciliatory, entreating tone to the natives, he turned to Ralph: "Do you know how narrowly you escaped doing something dreadful, Ralph? Had you succeeded in killing that creature the consequence might have been the massacre of us all. It is one of their Natmasses, and they believe that if it were killed the sea would rise up and submerge the whole island. I must do my best to make amends for you, and you must be more careful in future."

It was not without some difficulty that Mr. Reddie succeeded in pacifying the enraged natives, but finally, after much palavering, they were persuaded to forgive Ralph on the ground that he was a new-comer, and did not know any better, and

they accepted his assurance that he would henceforth take care not to offend in the same manner again if he could possibly help it.

This accident put Ralph upon his guard. It showed him that, however fair might be appearances, there were depths of danger underneath, and that he could not be too circumspect in his treatment of native notions and superstitions, however childish and absurd they might seem to him.

He applied himself with great diligence to the study of the language, and made rapid progress, finding Namuri a great help in this. They would go for long walks together, and Ralph would point out the objects that came under their eyes, while Namuri would give their names.

In a little while they were able to hold continued conversations, and the native showed considerable intelligence, not only in answering Ralph's inquiries, but in asking questions on his own account about the world of civilisation and its many wonders.

These Ralph was very glad to answer, being anxious to impress upon the young man, who would be sure to tell to others, how far ahead in everything the world from which he came was, and all because of the gospel of Jesus Christ which Mr. Reddie had travelled thousands of miles to preach to them.

The course of events had been running smoothly for some time, and Mr. Reddie was feeling much encouraged, when an ominous change in the conduct of the natives took place. The Sabbath-day meetings were reduced to a mere handful of women and children, none of the men being present; articles without number belonging to the missionary were stolen, some large pigs which had been brought from Samoa were speared and devoured, and the countenances of those who came to his house were surly, and their words few and gruff.

Mr. Reddie grew very much concerned. "I cannot understand what all this means," he said to Ralph. "I have asked several of the men, but they will not tell me, and I confess I am growing quite anxious. There's mischief brewing, that's evident, and if I could only discover what's at the bottom of their strange conduct I might be able to put things straight. Do you think you could get Namuri to tell you what's the matter? There's no time to be lost, for the longer we are in ignorance the greater our danger becomes."

"I will do my best to find out through Namuri," answered Ralph; "we're very good friends now, and I think he will tell me."

"Well, Ralph, try him at once, and God grant you may succeed, for I feel that the situation is very critical," Mr. Reddie responded.

Ralph accordingly went off to find Namuri, and to ascertain from him the cause of the disfavour into which the missionary seemed to have fallen. He realised that much diplomacy might be required, and resolved to be very discreet in carrying out his purpose.

CHAPTER XVIII

MISSIONARY PERILS

IT was not without difficulty that Ralph succeeded in finding Namuri, the truth being that the young fellow was too fond of the white men to take any part in the agitation against them, and yet he was too much afraid of his own people to openly oppose their plans. He had consequently deemed it best to keep out of sight so far as possible. Indeed it was only by chance, or rather by the help of Providence, that Ralph ran across him, and it was very evident that he would have been glad to evade the meeting.

He was very reluctant to tell anything, but finally, on Ralph pressing him very hard, and promising him a big brass ring that he knew he greatly admired, he consented to tell Mr. Reddie what all the trouble was about. He accordingly came that night, taking every precaution against being discovered, and revealed the whole cause of the change of bearing on the part of the natives.

It seemed that Mr. Reddie had unwittingly given

more than one cause of offence, and the people had taken this so much to heart that they were actually meditating the burning of the missionary station and the driving away of its occupants, if not their destruction.

The first complaint was with regard to the using of cocoa-nuts, which it seemed had been declared *Titaup*, that is, made sacred for several months, it being proposed to keep the whole crop in reserve for an approaching feast.

But Mr. Reddie and his household had not respected this prohibition, and had been using the nuts as freely as if it did not exist; consequently the natives feared that the Natmasses would be angry, and in their anger would destroy the whole crop.

The second charge was that the missionary had taken coral from the reef in order to make lime for a new building, and the Natmasses *hau smelt* the lime as it burned, and were so enraged with the natives for allowing it to be done, that they had caused the fish to go away, so that they could not be caught as plentifully as before.

The third charge, and the gravest of them all, was that a picturesque hill, evidently the crater of an extinct volcano, which was immediately in the rear of the missionary station, was the place of residence of the principal Natmasses, and the only path by

which those deities could pass to and from the sea-shore led through a piece of land upon which Mr. Reddie was preparing to build a new chapel, and which had been already fenced in for that purpose.

The natives naively confessed that their Natmasses would not dare to be angry with the *Nalaingheni* men (the new religious men) because Jehovah, their God, was far greater than any of the deities of Aneytum, but the Natmasses would vent their wrath upon them, the natives, and send sickness and death amongst them.

The whole thing seemed so absurd and childish that Ralph found difficulty in keeping his countenance as he listened; but Mr. Reddie gave Namuri's recital the gravest attention, and, when he had finished, said in his kindest tone—

"I am very glad to know this, Namuri, and very grateful to you for telling me. In the morning I will send for Nohoot, the chief, and for the principal men, and will endeavour to put myself right with them."

Accordingly, the next morning a messenger was sent for the chief, and an hour later he came, accompanied by half a score of his principal men. They were armed with clubs and spears, and their dark looks and sullen demeanour made it clear that they would need to be very carefully handled. Ralph regretted greatly that he was not yet suffi-

ciently acquainted with the language to follow all the terms of the conference. As it was, he had to be content with what he could gather from occasional words and the countenances of those taking part.

Mr. Reddie showed marvellous tact in dealing with this difficult situation. He did not make light of the native superstitions, and yet he was careful not to admit that they were in any way well founded. In substance, what he said to them was as follows:—

“ Dear friends, I have come here only for your own good, and I would not willingly do anything that would be harmful to you. Now, with regard to the cocoa-nuts, I knew nothing about their being *Titaup*, and, even had I known of it, I would have thought that it did not apply to me or to my family, because we are foreigners and should not be included in the prohibition. We will, however, respect the *tabu* for the present, although we think it very foolish, and hope you will soon put away such things.

“ As to the burning of the lime having anything to do with the frightening away of the fishes, that could not be, because it was Jehovah, and not the Natmasses, who made the sea and the fishes. But if you will allow me to burn the one kiln that is already prepared, and which I absolutely require to complete the building, I will take no more coral.

"And finally, as to the obstructing of the paths for the Natmasses, again I must tell you that I knew nothing about this, and the man from whom I bought the land never informed me of its being sacred, as it is.

"But, let me explain to you, that the house we are building on this sacred land is sacred too. It is to be used for the worship of Jehovah, the only true God, and I could not consent to its being removed, and, if you would allow it to stand where it is, I will promise not to obstruct the paths, on each side of it, which lead from the mountain to the sea, and if the Natmasses do use them, as you say, then surely they will not mind the passing by the sacred house as they go to and fro."

Nohoat and his companions listened to the missionary with profound attention, and Ralph, studying their countenances, recognised with relief and joy that they were being moved in the right direction.

Warm and hearty as his admiration for Mr. Reddie had hitherto been, it was greatly strengthened by the way he bore himself at this crisis. There was such a blending of sweetness with strength, of firmness with conciliation, in his words and manner. He so scrupulously avoided any affectation of superiority, addressing himself to his savage audience in the true spirit of brotherhood,

that they were won over by him in spite of themselves, and, after a brief consultation together, Nohoat, the chief, as spokesman for all, announced that the missionary's explanations were satisfactory, that the terms of conciliation were accepted, and that they would give up their evil designs and do their visitors no harm.

There was great rejoicing in the Reddie household when the natives had departed with many expressions of mutual good-will. Mrs. Reddie had been much alarmed, for the little handful of white people seemed so utterly helpless in the middle of so many heathen that she had awaited with intense anxiety the result of the palaver, and she prepared a little feast in honour of the happy issue, at which Ralph and Namuri were the guests.

Talking it over with Mr. Reddie afterwards, Ralph said, "The natives seemed so completely satisfied that they surely won't be troublesome again, will they, sir ? "

The missionary smiled somewhat sadly, and his face bore a look of infinite patience and love as he replied :

" I would it were so, Ralph, but superstition and savagery so deeply rooted die hard. Nohoat and his people are well enough inclined towards us for the time, but the so-called sacred men, whose influence will be gone for ever once Christianity

is established, will not give up the fight yet. Foiled this time, they will only plan some fresh line of attack, and we can but watch and pray, trusting in the strong arm of the Lord for help."

But the sacred men of the natives were not the only opponents with whom the missionary had to contend in his good work. To the unutterable shame of those who could fall so low, it must be told that, in the person of his own fellow-countrymen, he had foes who were even more dangerous and determined.

On the island of Aneytum, and within sight of the mission-station, was an establishment for the gathering of sandal-wood, occupied by a number of white men. Now the sandal-wood business in itself was quite unobjectionable, but unhappily it was conducted in a way that was nothing else than a disgrace to civilisation.

Not content with obtaining such quantities as they could of the coveted wood, which was worth from one hundred and fifty to three hundred dollars a ton in the Chinese market, through barter or purchase on terms that allowed of enormous profit, the traders resorted to the most abominable trickery and atrocious violence in order to augment their gains. They would, for instance, inveigle a native chief on board their vessel, and then demand so many boat loads of wood for his

ransom, and when the wood had been given by his people, instead of keeping their word, they would carry him off to another island, and there sell him for more wood to those who would be certain to kill and eat him as soon as the traders had gone.

Never had Ralph's heart been more profoundly moved to horror and indignation than when Mr. Reddie told him of what had been done by some of these demons in human guise in the island of Efate, only six years before.

Three sandal-wood vessels had visited the island together, and the crews being sent on shore, got into a quarrel with the natives which led to fighting, in which they used their firearms freely, killing a large number of the islanders. Panic-stricken at this slaughter, a party of thirty, consisting principally of old men and women and children, took refuge in a cave, hoping there to remain safe until the white intruders had gone. But the latter, frenzied with the lust for blood, determined to complete the work of extermination, and, gathering brushwood at the mouth of the cave, set fire to it, keeping up the fire until the whole shrieking company within were smothered into the silence of death !

"And were those fiends never punished ?" Ralph exclaimed, springing to his feet with horror and

amazement depicted on his countenance. "Surely they were!"

Mr. Reddie shook his head mournfully.

"There is no law for the poor islander yet," he replied. "It is nobody's business to take care of him, or to see that justice is done him. When the sandal-wood men had thus got rid of the inhabitants of the island—for those who escaped the massacre fled into the forest or the interior—instead of showing any remorse for their awful crime, they took all the wood they could find without paying for it, helped themselves to the natives' yams and pigs, taking nearly a hundred of the latter, and sailed away in triumph."

Ralph resumed his seat and was silent for a while, with his head sunk upon his breast. Then lifting it, and looking into the missionary's face with an earnest, searching expression that was characteristic of him, he said slowly:

"Mr. Reddie, when you hear of such things as that, does it not make you think that some men are nothing else than devils, with whom God cannot have anything to do?"

The missionary's face was full of tender reproof as he answered: "No, Ralph, not that. The mercy of God is everlasting and unchangeable. These men have debased the Divine image within them until it does seem to have been altogether obliterated, yet

they are still immortal souls for whom our Saviour died, and it is possible even for them to repent of their sins and find forgiveness."

"Did any of those who are at the station on this island have a hand in the affair at Efate?" Ralph asked, realising that he had gotten out of his depth in his previous question.

"Not that I know of," replied Mr. Reddie; "they are a bad lot, I'm afraid, and will give me much trouble yet, but not quite so bad as that, I believe."

It was not long after this conversation that, from some hints dropped by Namuri, and from his own observations, Ralph began to suspect that the sandal-wood men were plotting mischief against the missionary. The reason of their enmity was not far to seek. Not only did they take advantage of the poor ignorant savages in the most unscrupulous way when obtaining sandal-wood, but they made them the victims of their brutal licentiousness, buying their young women for some trifling article, such as a saw or a hatchet, and keeping them on board their vessels so long as they pleased. Now, if the missionaries had their way, and taught the islanders Christianity, there would soon be an end to this condition of things. The sandal-wood trade would have to be conducted on fair business principles, and the infamous traffic in women would be stopped; hence

the antagonism of the traders, who preferred to be left in the undisturbed enjoyment of the licence they had by virtue of being so far outside the bounds of civilisation.

From the very outset, the men belonging to the establishment in Aneytum had been opposed to Mr. Reddie. They refused to attend the preaching service in English, which he held every Sunday for the benefit of any white people who might be within reach of it, or if they did come, it was only to conduct themselves in so disorderly a fashion that it would have been far better had they stayed away.

They took pains to circulate among the natives stories to the effect that what the missionary intended was to learn their language and how to cultivate their land, and then to take possession of the island and to make the people his slaves. They sought to work upon their savage superstitions, assuring them that, if the missionary remained, the cocoa-nut trees would cease bearing, and the taro crop would fail, their pigs would all die, and the fish would leave the adjacent seas, so that they would all starve to death.

But, in spite of all their malice and misrepresentation, Mr. Reddie's hold upon his people strengthened daily, and the traders realised that if he was to be driven away, some stronger measures would be necessary. They accordingly

organised a plot so daring and reckless as to reveal the depths of degradation to which they had sunk. To carry it out effectually, it was necessary that they should have a large number of natives assisting them, and, as the arranging of this took much time and more talk, the secret could not be kept, but leaked out, so that Namuri heard of it, and Ralph's keen eyes detected the unusual activity of the establishment.

"The sandal-wood men are up to some mischief, Mr. Reddie," he said to the missionary. "Namuri says they mean to attack our station some night soon, and turn us all out and burn our houses down. Do you believe they'd dare to try anything like that, sir?"

"They're quite capable of it, Ralph, if they sufficiently inflame themselves with strong drink," answered Mr. Reddie. "They wouldn't do it while sober, but they'll fill themselves and their native accomplices with brandy, and then in their madness they'll commit any enormity. God grant that in some way their evil designs may be frustrated! We can only commit ourselves into His keeping."

That same night the threatened invasion of the mission premises took place. The Reddie household, serene in their faith in Divine protection, had all retired and were sleeping soundly, when they were aroused by hideous whoops and yells, and

shouted maledictions. Springing from their beds, the sight that met their startled gaze was appalling enough. Completely surrounding the house was a mob of white men and natives, every one of them under the influence of liquor, and all joining in the chorus of diabolic epithets and curses, aimed at the defenceless missionary and his family.

CHAPTER XIX

THE COMING OF THE WAR-SHIP

RALPH's impulse, when he saw the turbulent throng was to lay hold of the musket and pistol which his friends of the *Osprey* had left with him. But Mr. Reddie, anticipating his action, put up a warning hand :

"No, no, Ralph," he said gently ; "we are in God's hands, and shall put no reliance on carnal weapons. Come, we will face them, and see what they would do with us."

While Mrs. Reddie strove to quiet the children, who, thus rudely wakened, were crying out in terror, the missionary, looking as composed as if he were only about to meet his regular Sunday congregation, threw open the door of his house, and presented himself to the howling mob. Many of them carried torches, and as the glare of these fell on Mr. Reddie's face, lighting up its unblenching composure, the clamour abated, and presently ceased altogether ; while the men, abashed by the simple dignity and fortitude of the little man—who was no match

physically for any one of them—looked expectantly towards their leader.

Now, the head of the sandal-wood establishment, one Captain Baddon, had not intended to figure any more prominently than he could help in the affair of which he was the instigator. He counted upon the noise and confusion of the riotous concourse concealing his part in it to a large extent. The unexpected hesitancy of his myrmidons, however, compelled him to come to the front and assume command, lest they should be completely overawed by the man of God, and his scheme of intimidation be frustrated.

Assuming, therefore, his most truculent bearing, he swaggered up to the missionary, and said in a tone of insolent bravado—

"We've just come to give you notice to quit, Mr. Blackcoat. We don't want you or any of your kind on the island. You make the place unhealthy for the rest of us, and you'll just be obliging enough to take yourself off, bag and baggage, or you'll be sorry you didn't."

Mr. Reddie's composure never wavered, as he looked steadily into the ruffian's face, and replied in a firm voice—

"May I ask upon what authority you speak thus? I am not aware that you are the proprietor of the island, or have any more right upon it than

I have myself. Pray why should I obey your injunctions, and even were I disposed to do so, how could I leave the island with my family and my property?"

Captain Baddon laughed roughly.

"You needn't worry about that," he responded. "My schooner's down in the bay, and she'll run you across to Samoa all right, if you'll do as you're told and give no trouble. Come now, there's been palavering enough. Will you go of your own accord, or will you have to be made to?"

Mr. Reddie drew himself up, seeming to grow taller in the presence of those who would presume upon his apparent insignificance of stature, and, folding his arms across his chest, replied resolutely—

"I am here by the command of God, whose servant I am, and I recognise no right on your part to bid me begone."

At these words, Captain Baddon set up a shout of—"Come on, fellows! let's show him we don't want him," and was advancing with the evident intention of proceeding to personal violence, when the report of a cannon suddenly smote upon the still night air, and awakened echoes that came rolling back from the hills behind the station.

The effect upon the mob was to put them in such a panic that Ralph, who had a keen sense

of humour, could scarcely forbear laughing, although the moment before his heart had been filled with the gravest apprehension. The natives at once threw down their torches and vanished into the darkness, while the white men, sobered by surprise, halted in their advance towards Mr. Reddie, and looked at one another in a bewildered way, as though to say, "What on earth can be the meaning of that?"

The missionary alone understood the signal. It made him instantly master of the situation, and he was quick to seize upon his advantage.

"Ah!" he said with solemn emphasis, "be thankful that the warning came in time to prevent you carrying out your unholy plans. There is a British man-of-war in the harbour, and you had better return to your own place before her men come and catch you red-handed."

Completely cowed, the sandal-wood men slunk away, and as soon as they had gone, Mr. Reddie turned to Ralph and said with a beautiful smile of relief and joy—

"And now, Ralph, let us sing 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.'"

The song of praise was joined in by Mrs. Reddie. Even the little girls added their sweet piping, and then all retired to the living-room, where, upon their knees, they gave thanks to God for their deliverance from danger.

Sleep was banished from Ralph's eyes that night, and he impatiently awaited the coming of day that he might see the man-of-war. At the break of dawn, he went to the beach. The war-ship lay about a quarter of a mile off shore, a stout, trim, heavily-sparred frigate, with a broad band of checkered black and white about her hull.

She was the first of the kind he had ever seen, and his feelings were compounded of admiration and curiosity as his eye roved over her from stem to stern. He could see the men moving about on board, and hear the shrill piping of the boatswain's whistle, and he was full of eagerness to go off to her.

While he waited, and the sun rose higher in the heavens, a boat came away from the ship and rowed towards him. It had four seamen at the oars, and in the stern an officer evidently no older than Ralph himself, who, as soon as the boat touched the beach, sprang out and came up to Ralph, saying courteously—"I bid you good-morning, sir. I am Mr. Midshipman Holland of Her Majesty's ship *Pollux*; and I am sent to present Captain Macaulay's compliments to the missionary, and to inquire if all's well at the station."

Ralph at once extended his hand, which the midshipman took warmly.

"You could not be more welcome, sir," said he,

with frank pleasure. "We are all well at the station, thanks to that gun you fired last night, but if you had not come just when you did, we should have been in a very bad fix."

He then proceeded to relate the exciting incidents of the past night, whereat the young officer's face grew very grave.

"Captain Macaulay must be informed of this at once," he said. "The scoundrels deserve to be well punished, even though they were not able to do any more harm than to alarm you. I will go back to the ship and report to Captain Macaulay, and he will no doubt land himself after breakfast. Good-morning for the present. We shall meet again shortly, I trust."

So the midshipman pushed off, and Ralph returned to Mr. Reddie, full of admiration for the young Englishman he had just met, and who seemed to him the very essence of manliness and courtesy.

"What a fine thing it must be," he soliloquised, "to be an officer on board such a ship as that, and to sail all over the world! Sperm-whaling is not to be put beside it for a moment. I am sure that I should like it immensely; but"—and here he gave quite a deep sigh—"what's the use of thinking about it? It's entirely out of the question. But I hope the ship will stay here a good while. It will make things very pleasant."

He found Mr. Reddie awaiting him at the door, and told him of the conversation with the midshipman.

"I am very glad you said what you did, Ralph," said the missionary. "Captain Macaulay will now make a thorough investigation into the matter, and it may lead to our being rid of the sandal-wood men altogether."

Soon after breakfast boats were seen rowing away from the ship, and Mr. Reddie and Ralph hastened to the shore to meet them. The boats contained Captain Macaulay and several of the officers, who interchanged cordial greetings with Mr. Reddie and Ralph as soon as they set foot on shore.

"I understand that our coming was particularly timely, Mr. Reddie," said Captain Macaulay, "as you were in imminent danger of rough treatment at the hands of the sandal-wood men. I shall be much obliged by your giving me the full facts of the case in order that proper action may be taken."

The whole party accordingly went up to the mission station, where after they had paid their respects to Mrs. Reddie, they listened to an account of the exciting proceedings of the past night.

Captain Macaulay was greatly incensed at the recital. "The scoundrels deserve severe punishment," he said; "and if I had the necessary autho-

rity, I should be glad to inflict it upon them. As it is, I shall give them a warning that I trust will cause them to behave better in future, and I will report the whole affair to the Government, in order that measures may be taken to maintain law and order in these islands."

He was as good as his word. Having summoned Captain Baddon and his assistants to come before him, he gave them a sharp lecture upon their misconduct, and warned them that, if they attempted to repeat it, he would, on his own responsibility, arrest them all and take them to Australia for trial and punishment.

Captain Baddon, thoroughly frightened, and realising that Captain Macaulay fully meant what he said, readily promised all that was required of him, so that Mr. Reddie was relieved of further anxiety on the score of him.

The principal reason of the visit of the *Pollux*, which had been so opportune, was to enable a botanist, commissioned for the purpose, to make an examination of the natural products of the island. Accordingly, as soon as the matter of the sandal-wood men was settled, Captain Macaulay let it be known that he wished to explore the interior of the island if it could be done with safety.

"Why, certainly," Mr. Reddie assured him. "There is no part of the island to which I do not

feel free to go, and I shall myself take the greatest pleasure in accompanying you and in assisting you in any way that I can."

Then followed a series of picnics—for such they really were—that Ralph enjoyed immensely. Each day early after breakfast the exploring party would set forth, comprising Captain Macaulay, Mr. Reddie, the botanist, Mr. Leigh, three or four of the officers of the ship, Ralph, and half-a-dozen sailors carrying the baskets which contained the lunch always liberally provided by the captain.

Mr. Reddie secured the services of native guides, Namuri being among the number, and thus the island was explored from end to end.

Mr. Leigh was delighted with the floral and vegetable wealth of the island. He pronounced Aneytum the richest botanical field he had ever examined, and each day the sailors and guides returned loaded with as many specimens as they could carry.

For the most part these excursions were marked by no special interest. The natives at Annquant-chai, Annalaunse, Epege, Aname, and the other settlements seemed much impressed by the visitors, and showed no disposition to be unfriendly, while in some cases they manifested a wish to be helpful, that spoke volumes for the influence Mr. Reddie had upon them.

But there was one adventure that came near proving serious, and which, had it resulted otherwise than it did, would have proved a sad termination to the pleasant proceedings.

Mr. Leigh was resolved, before leaving the island, to accomplish the ascent of the highest mountain peak rising inland, and accordingly a day was set apart for the purpose. Neither Captain Macaulay nor Mr. Reddie accompanied the expedition, as they both had reached the time of life when the climbing of a mountain for no more practical purpose than to boast of the feat, or to see the view from the top, failed to enlist their enthusiasm.

But of course Ralph went. Such an enterprise was exactly suited to his adventuresome spirit, and he was glad that Midshipman Holland joined the party, for the more he saw of this fine young Briton the better he liked him. There were just a dozen of them altogether, three jack-tars and twice as many natives, among whom was Namuri, making up the number.

They set off at break of day, for they had a long way to go, and tramped steadily for several hours ere they reached the foot of the mountain which they designed to scale. Here they halted for a rest, and at the same time partook of their lunch, spending an hour very pleasantly in these occupations, combined with light-hearted conversation.

Mr. Leigh was in great feather. His stay on the island had been one long delight to him, and he was quite sanguine of finding some botanical specimens upon the mountain-tops that would surpass in interest anything already described.

He offered a sovereign as a prize to the first one of the boys to reach the summit, saying, as he held out the glittering coin: "Here you are, my lads. A gold medal for the first to the top! Each do your best now, for there'll be no consolation prize."

"All right," they responded, "we'll try;" and so the race to the summit began.

As it happened, none of the native guides had ever made the ascent, because the mountain was regarded as the abode of certain powerful Natmasses who would be sure to resent any intrusion upon their domain, and, moreover, they were not willing to venture upon the sacred ground, even under the auspices of the white visitors, over whom the Natmasses had no control.

They therefore hung back, and neither threats nor bribes could move them. Consequently, as there was no time to be lost, and the way seemed clear enough to enable the explorers to do without their services, Mr. Leigh bade them remain at the resting-place, and went on, taking the three sailors, who carried ropes in case of their being required.

It was high noon when they got off, and, full of eager expectation, they plunged into the dense forest which clothed the lower flanks of the mountain. The thick tropical undergrowth stoutly opposed their progress, and in many places the sailors had to slash an opening through it with their cutlasses ere they could proceed. But this did not daunt them. They had counted upon it, and they knew that the higher they climbed the less difficulty there would be on that score.

By the end of an hour they had shaken themselves free of this impeding vegetation, and had come out upon a projecting spur which gave them a clear view in every direction. They could see the mission station looking like a white speck amid the green foliage, and the man-of-war riding at anchor in the harbour, while above them, a full thousand feet, towered the mountain-peak they had yet to conquer.

After a few minutes they were off again, and now the race to the summit had really begun. The higher they climbed, the more difficult and dangerous grew the ascent. Crags had to be crept around upon ledges so narrow that there was scarce room to put one foot in front of the other. Abysmal ravines had to be avoided, and steep slopes traversed where a slip of the foot would have meant a glissade to death.

Ralph, having, by a short cut which only his keen eyes had perceived, got a little in advance of the others, was just about to turn a sharp corner, when the ledge crumbled away treacherously beneath him, and, uttering a piercing cry of "Help! help! I'm falling!" he vanished from the sight of his companions.

CHAPTER XX

DANGERS AND DIFFICULTIES

WHEN Ralph disappeared into the chasm, Mr. Leigh and young Holland were but a few yards behind him, yet too far off to afford any aid in time to save him.

Approaching the precipice as closely as they dared—for the rock was liable to break away under their weight—they peered over, and, to their great relief, saw that Ralph's fall had been somehow checked half-way, and that he might be reached by means of ropes.

"Hulloa, Ralph," shouted the botanist. "Are you badly hurt? Can you hold on there?"

Ralph was in such a position that he could not look up, and he did not dare move for fear of the rock crumbling beneath him, but he managed to call back, so that they heard him above—

"I'm not much hurt. Hurry up! I can't hold on here long."

With the utmost haste the ropes were spliced together, and then, a firm standing-ground having

been secured, the looped end was thrown down to Ralph. He was so awkwardly situated that at first he could not grasp the rope which dangled near him, and it was not until, venturing all upon one effort, he fairly flung himself at it, that he was able to get his hands into the loop, and hold on firmly.

"Keep your grip now, Ralph, and we'll soon have you out of that," called out Mr. Leigh, and then they began to heave up the rope.

It was necessary to do it slowly, for the sides of the precipice were very jagged, and Ralph was in danger of being hurt by their sharp points. Foot by foot he was drawn up until at last Holland, leaning over the edge, caught him under the shoulders, and helped him up beside him.

"There you are!" he exclaimed exultantly.
"Safe and sound. How badly damaged are you?"

Ralph felt himself for a moment before replying.
"Thank God!" he said, "I believe I'm not hurt at all; only my clothes seem to have suffered."

And so it was. In some miraculous fashion he had almost entirely escaped injury. His shins were slightly barked, to be sure, and his hands scraped a little, but these hurts seemed too trifling to take into account in view of his escape from an awful death.

"Well, my boy, will you go ahead with us, or

would you rather return to the camp?" Mr. Leigh asked with kindly sympathy.

"Why, go ahead with you," Ralph responded emphatically. "I'm all right, and I haven't given up hopes of winning your gold medal, by any means."

"Well spoken, Ralph!" said the botanist. "You're made of the right stuff. Now then, we'll push ahead."

The remainder of the ascent had one advantage in being free from the dense undergrowth which had so impeded the climbers' progress below, but, on the other hand, it was so craggy and precipitous that great care had to be exercised at every step. But they kept resolutely on, and at length arrived at a kind of broad ledge just above which rose the unmistakable summit.

The midshipman and Ralph gave each other a significant glance. The finish of the race was at hand. Who would be the victor? Each choosing his own route, they began the final spurt. It was stiff climbing, and the crumbling rock rendered constant care necessary in the placing of the feet.

Mr. Leigh and the sailors were soon left behind while the boys toiled on in eager competition. Holland was the stouter and stronger of the two, but Ralph was the more agile, so that the conditions were thus equalised.

Neither could see how the other was getting on, and they therefore were quite in the dark as to their chances of success until the very last moment. All the greater, therefore, was Ralph's delight when on reaching the summit he found it unoccupied. There was no sign of Holland, nor did he appear for a full minute, when he came toward Ralph with extended hand and smiling face, saying: "I congratulate you. You've won the gold medal."

Ralph thanked him warmly, little suspecting that the good-hearted fellow, rightly reasoning that the winning of the sovereign would mean far more to Ralph than it would to himself, had purposely held back until he felt sure that Ralph had reached the summit.

Mr. Leigh came up about ten minutes later, and his first question was: "Well—who won—the missionary or the midshipman?"

"Ralph won," replied Holland, looking as pleased as if he had been the winner. "He beat me by about a minute."

"Here you are then, Ralph," said the botanist, holding out the shining sovereign. "I'm glad it goes to you, for you have been so good to us since we've arrived."

"Indeed he has," chimed in Holland. "Our visit would not have been half so pleasant, had it not been for him."

"And I'm sure that I shall never forget the good times I've been having with you," returned Ralph in a tone of deep feeling. "It's just been a first-class holiday all the time."

After this pleasant interchange of compliments, they gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the splendid prospect which their lofty position commanded. They were in the exact centre of the island, and their vision had an unrestricted sweep, not only over all its rich variety of mountain and valley, of dark ravine and bright sun-bathed plain, but out across the blue waves that seemed like mere tiny wrinkles upon the Pacific's broad bosom, to where the island of Tana rose from the sea, and at the moment made itself particularly noticeable by one of its volcanoes being in action.

"I wish we were on that island just now," said Mr. Leigh. "I should like to get as good a view as possible of that eruption."

"But shouldn't we be in danger?" asked Ralph, who had never seen a volcanic eruption before, and to whom the heavy pall of smoke, lit up as by frequent flashes of lightning, seemed very good warning to keep away instead of approaching.

"Oh no," replied the botanist. "With those volcanoes their bark is much worse than their bite. Why, my dear fellow, for that matter we're standing upon an extinct volcano at this moment."

Ralph could not repress a start upon hearing this, which made the other two smile.

"Do you mean to say, sir," he asked, "that this beautiful mountain once sent out smoke and flame as that one is doing?"

"Certainly, Ralph," responded Mr. Leigh, "and not so very long ago either, as time is counted in the making of the world. Nearly all the islands about here are of volcanic origin, and it is quite within the bounds of possibility that the very mountain upon which we stand, although it has been still so long, should break forth again, just like the one in Tana."

This statement made Ralph look grave. There were already perils enough connected with life upon these islands, and to add to them the possibility of being sometime overwhelmed by a volcanic eruption was no trifling matter. But he was not one to allow such a thought to weigh upon his mind.

"Oh well," he said, with a characteristic toss of his head, "the volcanoes on this island have been quiet so long that perhaps they've gone out of the business altogether, and we need not worry about them."

Mr. Leigh laughed approvingly.

"That's the right kind of philosophy," he said; "never trouble trouble, till trouble troubles you, and you'll get through the world all the easier and better too."

The afternoon was waning fast, and they could linger no longer, greatly as they would have liked to do so. They accordingly began the descent, which they accomplished in far less time than the climbing up. They found their native guides waiting where they had left them, and apparently much relieved to see them again safe and sound, and showing no sign of having suffered anything through the wrath of the Natmasses.

Darkness fell before the mission station was reached, but the natives picked their way without difficulty, and the party got home very footsore and weary, yet thoroughly satisfied with the day's work.

The next morning, to the great regret of the Reddies and Ralph, the *Pollux* continued her voyage, leaving behind pleasant memories of her gentlemanly officers, and a hope of a return some time in the future.

For a little while, Ralph found the life at the station a little dull and monotonous after the pleasant excitement of the past week; but he settled down again presently, and devoted himself with special assiduity to the printing work, in which he took a keen interest. The little hand-press, which had been procured by Mr. Reddie in Boston, was an excellent machine of its kind, and Ralph was able to strike off hundreds of copies of

hymns and a portion of the Bible in the language of the natives, as it had been taken down by Mr. Reddie. He enjoyed the work very much — far more indeed than the teaching in the little school — although he was faithful in doing that, for he saw that the missionary needed all the help that he could give him.

Among the many evil customs of the barbarous people of the island was one which Mr. Reddie sought strenuously to abolish, and that was the strangling of the wives of the men who had just died. The horrid practice had been universal, and what made it especially difficult to prevent was that in many cases the widow was no less anxious to be strangled than her husband's relatives were to take her life, the poor ignorant creatures having some vague notion of the future life that made the wicked deed incumbent upon them.

In his endeavour to do away with the strangling, the missionary more than once got into situations of real peril to himself. Shortly after the sailing of the *Pollux*, word was brought by Namuri that one of the natives was dying, and that his wife would be strangled as soon as the breath left his body. Mr. Reddie at once determined to go to the hut in which the dying man lay.

"Will you come with me, Ralph?" he asked; "we may have more influence if we go together."

"Certainly, sir," responded Ralph; "shall I take my musket or my pistol?"

"No, indeed, my son," answered the missionary, smiling. "What we do must be done by means of entreaties and arguments; a show of force would be worse than useless."

They accordingly set off, and had no difficulty in finding the place, for the wailing of the women could be heard at a great distance.

"We are just in time," said Mr. Reddie; "that is the death-wail."

On reaching the hut, they found a large number of natives assembled, and from their scowling looks and wrathful mutterings, it was evident that the visit of the missionary was far from welcome.

Mr. Reddie at once inquired for the wife of the dying man, but could get no satisfaction. Some said that he had none, others that she was at another village, while others admitted that she was present, but refused to point her out. Mr. Reddie then proceeded to state the object of his coming, and to point out in the strongest terms the wickedness of strangling.

The majority of his audience manifested strong displeasure at his presence, and refused to be moved at his words. Some few listened attentively, but endeavoured to persuade him to leave, saying that the sick man would not die that day. But neither

black looks nor deceiving words had any effect upon the heroic man of God. He saw that the man must die soon, and he was resolved to await the end.

In the course of the day death came to the poor sufferer, and at once the body was prepared for burial, being laid out on a mat with a spear and club placed beside it, and the small noose that is used in throwing the spear placed in the fore-finger of the right hand. The whole was then bound together, and a large stone tied to the feet, as the usual place of burial was the sea.

While these operations were going on, the corpse was surrounded by women wailing in the most frightful manner, and Mr. Reddie took it for granted that the widow was amongst them. He therefore waited until he saw the body carried out to the shore and laid in a canoe preparatory to being cast into the watery grave.

Having seen no signs of the dreaded strangling, he now began to congratulate himself that his intervention had been successful, as the horrid work is always done as soon as the husband dies, and usually on the spot.

"I think we can go now, Ralph," he said, with a big sigh of relief. "The poor widow will not be strangled now."

They accordingly returned to the mission station, but great was his disappointment and grief to learn

the next morning that the widow had been secretly conveyed to another village and there strangled, and that very afternoon he saw her body being thrown into the sea at the same place as her husband's had been.

On another occasion, however, his good offices were crowned with success, and, being aided by several of the natives whom he had brought round to his way of looking at the matter, he was able to rescue the widow, although she was not in the least grateful for his interposition, and indeed berated him furiously for not allowing her to die with her husband.

The domestic life of the Reddies was very lovely in its sweet serenity. No matter how heavily the anxieties and responsibilities of his work might press upon him, the missionary contrived to maintain an unclouded front in the home circle, and Ralph often looked upon him with wondering admiration, as he conversed brightly with his wife or played merrily with his children, when, as Ralph well knew, his heart was heavy with apprehension or wrung by disappointment.

"They talk about heroes," he soliloquised, "and give great praise to those who have been brave on the battlefield, or in other places where they had the presence of others to cheer them; but here is this man, all alone in the midst of these savages,

some of whom would be glad enough to take his life if they dared, and if he is not more heroic than many a man who has the credit of it, then I don't properly understand what the word means."

And Ralph was right enough. Only a spirit naturally dauntless, strengthened and inspired by passionate love for the souls of the benighted heathen, could have been equal to the enterprise which Mr. Reddie was carrying on, single handed, when Providence gave him the young American as a companion and assistant.

That Ralph was in nowise exaggerating in his saying that there were those among the savages ready to take the missionary's life, a thrilling experience at Epege made only too clear.

To this village, which was situated in the north of the island, directly across from Anelcauhat, the mission station, Mr. Reddie, Ralph, Namuri, and a couple of Christian natives had gone in the boat. Their reception was promising enough, and the prospect seemed favourable for the establishment of a station there. They accordingly decided to remain for the night, and were just about retiring to rest, when one of the native companions came in, and, with terror-stricken countenance, informed Mr. Reddie that a hostile party had laid a plot to attack them in their sleep and kill them all.

CHAPTER XXI

AN IMPORTANT RECRUIT

ON being informed of the diabolical plot to take their lives while asleep, Mr. Reddie was at first incredulous. He had seen no signs of hostility at Epege, and the natives were usually so little able to conceal their true feelings from an acute observer, that he did not understand how they had managed to so completely deceive him. But the natives made it clear that the conspirators did not belong to Epege. They came from another village, and, being instigated to it by the "sacred men," who realised that their influence was fast waning, and would soon be gone altogether if the missionary's work continued to expand as it was doing, they were seizing this opportunity of executing their foul design.

"We must save ourselves by instant flight," said Mr. Reddie, when he was satisfied of the reality of the peril. "God grant that we may not be discovered and overtaken."

With the utmost quiet and caution they slipped

out of the hut, and made their way towards the boat. Happily the night was very dark, and even though their enemies were watching for them, they could not have seen them at a distance of ten yards.

Ralph felt his heart in his mouth as he crept along just behind Mr. Reddie, who was following Namuri. He now regretted that he had not brought his revolver, for even though he might not use it to take the life of any of their assailants, it could hardly fail to be helpful in scaring them off before they had time to carry out their fell purpose.

Yard by yard the path to the shore was passed over, and still no sign of the hostile savages.

The farther they got from the village the higher rose their hopes of escape, and, when the pebbles of the beach crunched under their feet, Ralph thought the danger was pretty well past. But just then they heard sounds in the bushes through which they had come which sent thrills of apprehension to their hearts, and the next moment the stillness of the night was broken by the savage cries of the plotters.

"To the boat!" exclaimed Mr. Reddie. "Run for your lives."

Now happily the boat had not been drawn up on the beach, but anchored out a few yards from the shore, and consequently did not need to be shoved off. They were thus able to dash through

the water, and throw themselves into it without a moment's delay.

To this circumstance they undoubtedly owed their lives, for the savages rushing down to the shore hesitated when they found their intended victims were already afloat, and Mr. Reddie was quick to take advantage of the delay, and with the aid of Ralph to shove the boat out into deep water where the oars were promptly got to work.

In that pitchy darkness it was not safe to venture far out to sea, as there were many submerged reefs in the vicinity, and so, as soon as they had rowed beyond the range of the savages' ears, the oars were shipped, and the boat floated motionless upon the water. Mr. Reddie rightly judged that there would be no further pursuit, as it was not according to the savage nature to make another attempt after having been foiled in their first, and it was therefore quite safe for the boat to remain where it was until morning.

"The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them," he said softly as though speaking to himself. Then he added in a louder tone, "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee." "O Ralph, how wonderfully comforting is the Blessed Book! With His word as our staff and stay, even the Valley of the Shadow of Death is robbed of its terrors. I love life. I

have no desire to die, but when my time comes, whether it be while in the midst of my work upon this island, or in the far future, I shall answer the summons without fear, for I am His, and He may do with me as seemeth good unto Him."

The sublime yet simple faith of the devoted missionary was a constant inspiration to Ralph. It surpassed all that he had previously known of Christian courage, and filled him with a noble emulation. So that he would say to himself in all sincerity: "I would rather be like Mr. Reddie than the richest merchant in New Bedford."

The long hours of the night dragged on slowly, but without any fresh cause for apprehension, and with break of day the boat was pointed out to sea, the sail hoisted, and the return to the mission station safely accomplished.

In spite of opposition and difficulties and dangers such as have been indicated, the new religion was making progress that gave good ground for hope.

Soon after the Epege incident a most important addition was made to the little company of Christians in the person of Waihit. This man was what the natives call a *Natimi itaup*—a sacred man—and was one of the most influential personages in the district. He had been a very fierce and savage-looking man, and of so passionate a nature that when excited or enraged he seemed capable of anything.

Although his hut was within sight o' the mission station, Mr. Reddie for a long time could not induce him to attend any of the services, and all advances on the missionary's part met with a gruff repulse. But the visit of the man-of-war, and the marked respect paid by her officers to Mr. Reddie, produced a deep impression upon Waihit's mind.

He evidently argued that if the people belonging to the mighty ship, whose owner was the Great White Queen, had so high an opinion of the missionary, his acquaintance must be worth cultivating after all. Accordingly, a little while after the *Pollux* had gone, Ralph on Sunday morning observed Waihit with club in one hand and spear in the other, and evidently decked out in his bravest attire, which was not very ample, to say the most, coming towards the mission chapel.

"I wonder what he's up to now," Ralph said to himself; "he looks as if he meant mischief. Can he be intending to interfere with our service?"

The normal expression on Waihit's countenance was so stern and forbidding that, to see him thus fully armed, and walking with a quick decided step as if he knew exactly what he was about, might well arouse apprehension; and Ralph was for a moment undecided whether to run into the house and warn Mr. Reddie, who, he knew, was engaged preparing for the service, or to go to meet Waihit himself

and endeavour to ascertain the purpose of his coming.

After a brief hesitancy he resolved to go to meet Waihit, and accordingly, putting on his most pleasant expression, he hastened forward with extended hand, saying: "Good-morning, Waihit! Are you coming to make us a visit? We are glad to see you. You will perhaps come to the service."

Waihit stopped short, and letting club and spear rest upon the ground, looked exactly like a child whose purpose has been discovered by an older person, and who is astounded at the other's penetration.

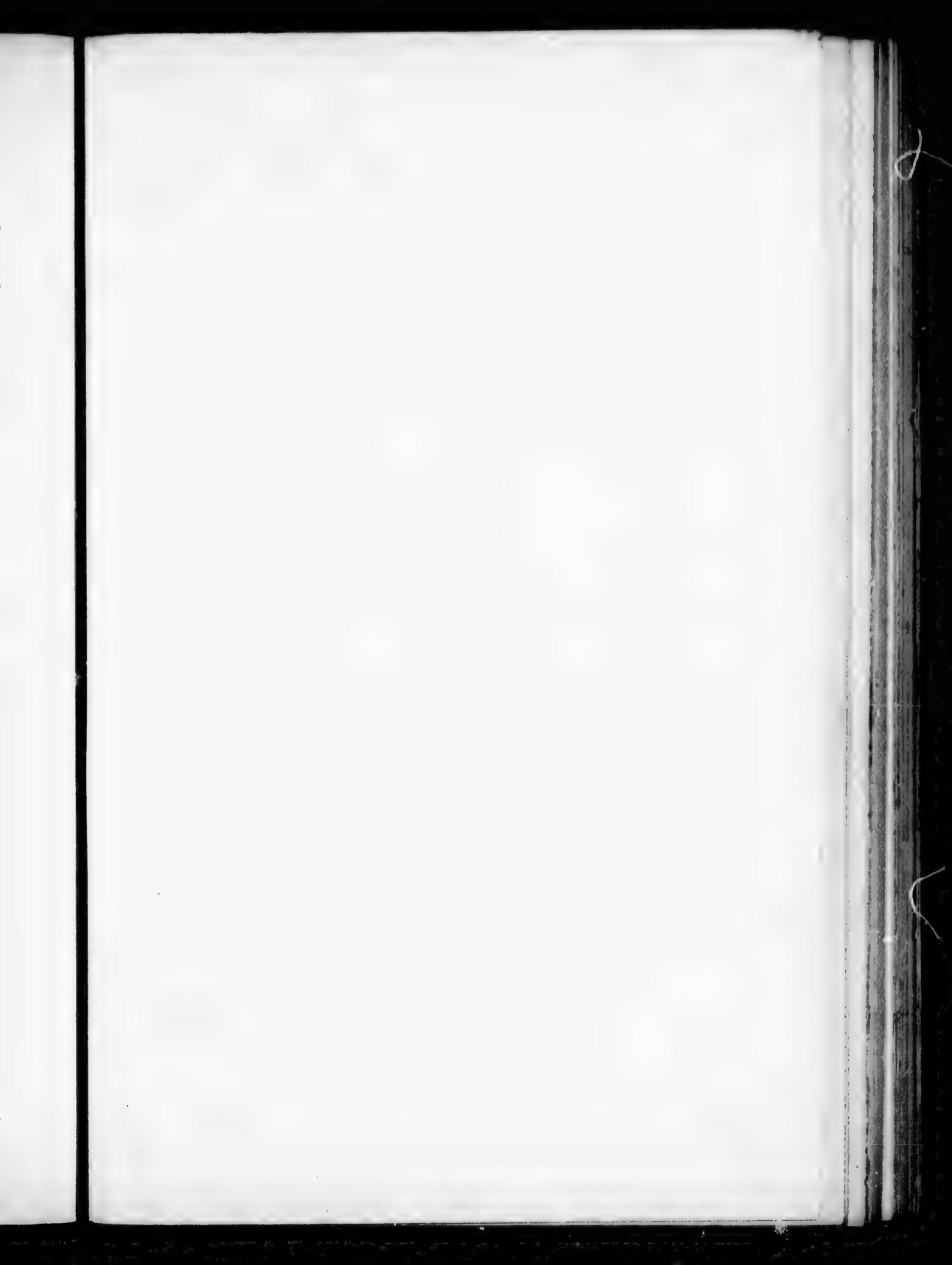
"I don't know," he answered, after a moment's hesitation. "I will think about it. I have come to see Missi this morning."

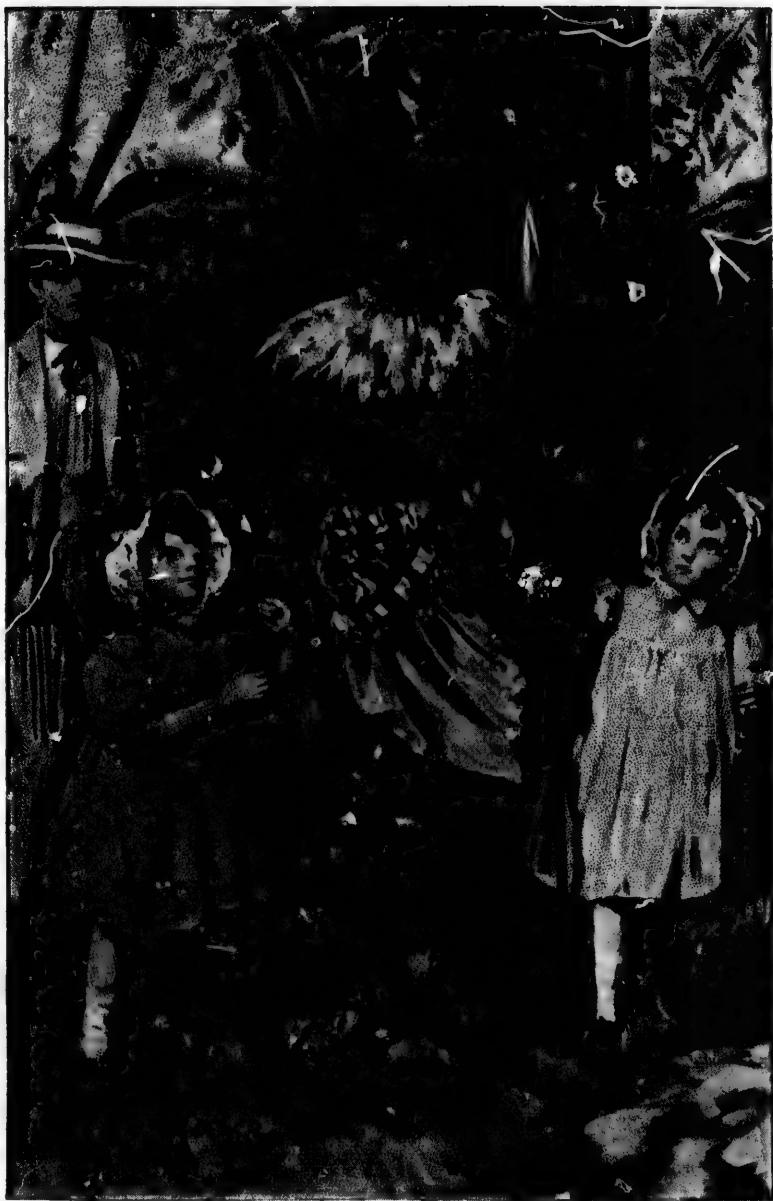
Quite relieved at the big native's response, Ralph said cordially: "The missionary will be very glad to see you. I will go and tell him you are here;" and off he ran to the house, bursting into Mr. Reddie's room with radiant face to announce:

"Waihit is outside. He says he has come to see you, and perhaps may stay to the service."

Mr. Reddie closed his Bible with a fervent "God be praised!" and hastened to the door.

Waihit stood there, the very picture of savage dignity, and said with solemn importance: "I am come to see Missi."





YOUNG MISSIONARIES.

"And you are very welcome," responded Mr. Reddie. "Will you enter the house?"

At this invitation, however, the savage shook his head. He was not yet prepared to go so far as that.

Too wise to press the matter, Mr. Reddie said: "As you please, Waihit. We shall soon be going to the service, and you will come with us, I hope."

When they set out for church a few moments later, Waihit stalked along saying nothing, while the two little girls cast timid glances at him as they walked beside their mother.

On reaching the church door Waihit halted and seemed reluctant to enter, when the little girls, moved by a common impulse that showed how they shared the spirit of their father, went up to him, and each taking a hand, said sweetly, "You come in too."

The effect upon the savage was magical. His grim countenance broke into a smile, and putting down both club and spear, he entered the church and took his seat between his charming little ushers.

"And, behold, a little child shall lead them," were the words that came into Ralph's mind as he witnessed the beautiful incident.

The missionary preached with more than his wonted fervour and point that morning, and it was evident that Waihit was deeply impressed. He

listened most attentively, nodding his head occasionally in token of assent to what was being said. As soon as the service was ended he got up and stalked away, looking to neither right nor left. It was plain that he desired to be left alone to think over what he had heard.

Thenceforward he was a regular attendant at all the services, and a marked change became manifest in his appearance and manner. The ferocity of the lion gave place to the gentleness of the lamb, and Ralph was witness of an incident that showed in a striking way how genuine was the savage's conversion to Christianity.

Waihit had been out fishing, and, fortune favouring him, he returned with a very large and highly-prized fish, which he left for a while in his canoe while he went off to invite some of his friends to come and help him eat it. During his absence, another native, envious of his success, and coveting the fish, stole it from the canoe, and hid it in the bushes until he could carry it to his own hut. Presently Waihit came back, missed his prize, and was at once transported with rage at his loss.

Now it happened that the theft had been observed by a woman who informed him of the guilty party. He at once grasped his spear, and "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," set off in pursuit of the offender

Ralph chanced to encounter him in the way, and, realising from his appearance that there was mischief brewing, thought it wise to follow him if haply he might be able to intervene.

Waihit was not long in finding the man he sought, and, after covering him with reproaches, was just lifting his spear to drive it through his body, when Ralph, running up, exclaimed : " Waihit, don't do that ! You'll be so sorry afterwards."

The big native stood for a moment as if carved in stone, while the thief cowering before him, and already tasting the bitterness of death, gave a glance of hope at his unexpected advocate. Then the upraised spear dropped to Waihit's side, the murderous rage left his countenance, and, wheeling sharply about, he went back to the shore in silence.

Speaking to Mr. Reddie about it that evening, he said with a simplicity that was very touching in a man so big and strong : " It was in my heart to kill the man that stole my fish, and I would have done it had not the young Missi spoken to me. But now I see that if I had spilled that man's blood, I should never have been happy again. Truly the Nalaiheni (new religion) makes a great change inside us. I am so glad that the young Missi spoke to me in time."

Waihit proved a powerful helper to the mission cause. In the days of his heathenism he had been

one of the most important men on the island, being credited with supernatural powers, among them the command of the sea at Anelcauhat.

But once soundly converted to Christianity he threw his whole influence on its side, and showed the same courage and determination in supporting Mr. Reddie that had characterised him previously. His conversion did not weaken his nature ; it only changed the current of his being. Ralph saw in him much that reminded him of Sakaio, and was the more drawn to him on that account.

Indeed they presently became great friends, the stalwart native evidently feeling more at his ease with him, great as was his admiration for Mr. Reddie. They often went out fishing together, sometimes in the missionary's boat, which was a fine seaworthy little craft, fitted for both oars and sails, and sometimes in Waikiki's canoe, a particularly large, handsome one of which he was very proud.

It was while out in the latter that they shared in an adventure that came near bringing the career of both to an awful ending.

This was the way it happened. They had gone up to the north of the island in quest of fish, and finding none close inshore, had ventured farther than usual, being determined not to return to Anelcauhat empty-handed. They were rewarded by the fish biting freely, and both became so intent

in their occupation that they failed to observe an ominous change in the weather, which had been fair enough when they set out.

One of the sudden storms characteristic of the region swept down upon them ere they could run into shelter. It came from the south, and they had no alternative but to run before it, although in so doing they were leaving their island farther behind them every moment.

Waihit managed the canoe with amazing skill, again and again avoiding a complete capsize by dexterous powerful strokes of his paddle. As for Ralph, his business was to bale with all his might, else their frail craft would be swamped by the waves leaping in over the low sides. On and on they flew before the blast, Waihit seeming to have eyes in the back as well as in the front of his head, with such wonderful adroitness did he evade the onset of the foaming surges that were ever threatening to break upon the canoe and bury it in their frothing bosom.

It was no time for speech between the two imperilled men. They fully realised how many were the chances against them, and how much depended upon the management of the canoe.

The afternoon waned while they were thus fighting for their lives against wind and wave, yet the storm showed no signs of abating.

Night comes suddenly in the Tropics. There is no long twilight as in the North, and if darkness enveloped the canoe ere some safe haven was reached, the gallant struggle would soon be over for ever.

Ralph prayed earnestly as he baled. Life never seemed more precious to him than at that moment, and the words of the Psalm came into his mind : "The waters had overwhelmed us ; the proud waters had gone over our soul, if the Lord had not been on our side," and he found comfort in them even in the midst of their appalling danger.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ESCAPE FROM TANA

A LITTLE before sunset there came into sight to the north a dark mass upon the horizon's edge, which rapidly loomed larger until it declared itself as another of the New Hebrides islands.

"Tana!" cried Waihit, as he bent forward towards Ralph, "Tana!"

Ralph nodded assent. It could be nothing else; yet the prospect of land being in sight did not fill either of them with the joy and delight that might have been expected. The reason was clear enough to both. Tana at that time was the abode of the fiercest cannibals in the whole group of islands, and its inhabitants bore a special enmity against those of Aneytum. For Waihit to be discovered and recognised on landing meant certain death and the subsequent horrors of cannibalism, and there was no reason to suppose that Ralph would meet with any different fate.

Yet what was the alternative? To remain out in the canoe after darkness fell could result in only

one way. It was an awful dilemma, and Ralph felt that the decision must rest with Waihit, as he could neither counsel nor control him.

The big native for a time seemed hopelessly perplexed, and Ralph waited anxiously for him to speak. At last he lifted his head, and there was a look of resolute courage on his countenance as he said—

"Let us go to Tana. They may not see us land. We will hide in the trees until morning, and then, if the storm be gone, we will go back to Aneytum."

"All right," responded Ralph; "there is nothing better to be done. God grant our landing may not be noticed."

By a happy chance, the canoe was making for a part of the island where there was no village, and Waihit's face brightened as, after eagerly scanning the shore, he exclaimed—

"No huts—no people, but big reef."

There was indeed a big reef, a great barrier of coral, over which the billows were breaking with frightful force, and upon which the canoe would be smashed like an egg-shell.

Ralph could not see how the danger was to be avoided, but the keen eye of Waihit perceived an opening. Putting forth all his vast strength, he toiled with the paddle until he forced the canoe round to the right, and then, amid a roar and rush of foaming surges that seemed as if they

must overwhelm her, the frail craft leaped through the narrow break in the barrier, and, although almost swamped, floated safely into the calmer water inside. It was a narrow shave, but Waihit's skill and strength had triumphed, and with thankful hearts he and Ralph paddled the canoe safely and slowly to the beach.

No sign of life was visible, and they were able to find a good place to draw up the canoe and to hide themselves in the thick undergrowth of the forest ere the darkness came. That night in Tana ever remained in Ralph's memory as one of the strangest experiences in his life.

The storm subsided soon after their landing, and was succeeded by a great calm, which enabled them to hear every sound. They were in little danger of discovery by the inhabitants, because these would all be gathered at their huts for the night, and there were no wild beasts to be feared, the islands being entirely without such creatures. Yet the circumstances were such as to render sleep out of the question, and, sitting close together, they talked in low tones, more for the comfort of hearing one another's voices than because they had anything particular to talk about.

Again and again they heard the sound of rustling in the thicket about them, and their hearts beat fast, while Waihit grasped his spear and held it ready for

action. Once, when Ralph was dozing off in sheer weariness, he was startled by some creature moving about very near him, and sprang to his feet, only to hear a low laugh from Waihit, and the reassuring words, "Pig won't hurt you. Don't you mind;" and sure enough it was only an enterprising grunter seeking some favourite roots in an out-of-the-way place. With the first break of dawn they were on the alert, and were just about to get the canoe out of its hiding-place and carry it down to the water's edge, when Waihit, whose eyes really seemed to include everything within the whole circle of vision, and whose ears caught the slightest sound, dragged Ralph back into the thicket, saying in an anxious undertone, "There's one coming. We must wait."

Ralph's heart almost stopped beating. If they should be discovered, an awful death was certain.

Peering through the leafy screen that hid them, they saw a woman accompanied by a boy appear from the left and walk slowly along the beach. When they came to the spot where the canoe had landed and saw the marks of human feet, they stopped, and the woman, after examining them for a moment carefully, said something to the boy.

At that moment Ralph's arm was grasped by Waihit. "You take the boy. I take the woman." He looked into the native's face and read his meaning. To save themselves they must seize these

two ere they could give the alarm. There was no alternative, but he delayed long enough to make one condition: "You won't kill them, Waihit?"

"No—not kill them," the native whispered back, and then the two with a great bound sprang out upon the unconscious pair, who had their backs turned to them. They had them in their grasp and covered their mouths with their hands ere either had a chance to cry out.

The terror of the two was pitiable. They evidently thought they were to be killed, and made no resistance whatever, but gazed appealingly into the countenances of their captors as though to say, "Oh, spare our lives. We've done you no harm." Having effected their capture so easily, the question now was what to do with their prisoners. Before his conversion Waihit would have settled the difficulty in a summary fashion by knocking them both on the head with his club. But no such fell purpose was in his mind now. He simply sought to protect himself and Ralph, and so long as that was accomplished was quite content that the poor frightened creatures should go unscathed.

Ralph had nothing to suggest. His brain was in a perfect whirl, and he could only follow Waihit's lead. The native's mind worked quickly. "Come back here," he directed, drawing the woman back to the bush, Ralph doing likewise with the boy.



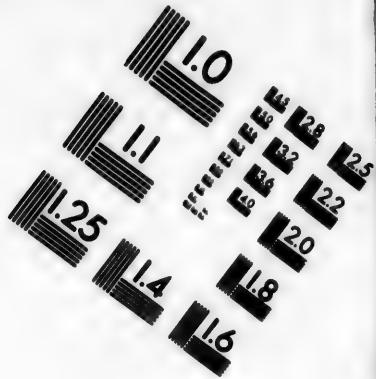
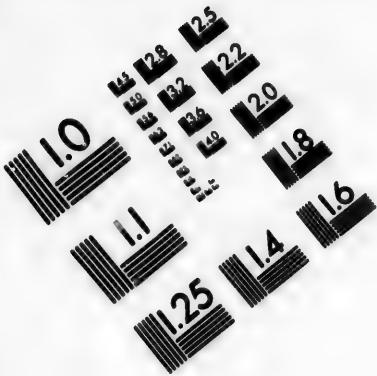
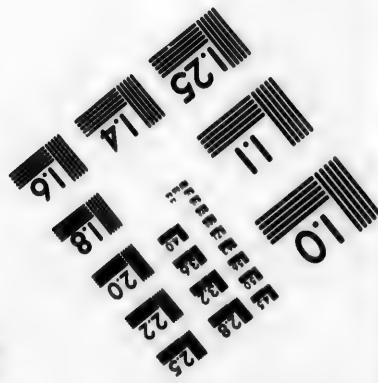
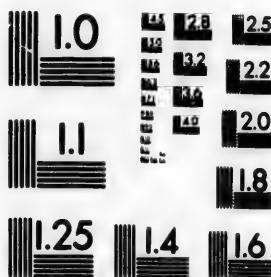


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Then seating the two side by side he bade Ralph stand over them club in hand ready to strike should they venture to move or cry out. This arranged to his satisfaction, he hastened to drag the canoe to the water's edge, and make it ready for launching.

"Now, Ralph, come quick," he called out. Ralph paused a moment to say warningly to the woman and boy, "Stay there now until we are gone far away." He knew they could not understand his speech, but they could his gestures, and hoping that they would obey, he ran down to the canoe, sprang in after Waihit, and each of them seizing a paddle they put their utmost strength into their strokes. Fortunately the sea was as calm as a mill-pond, and the light canoe shot quickly over the water, darted through the opening in the reef, and was out on the open sea in a remarkably short space of time. More than once Ralph glanced back at the two he had left sitting on the edge of the bush, and they were still there as motionless as statues and watching the flight of the canoe with wide-open eyes. The whole affair had been so sudden and startling as to paralyse them with terror, and not until the canoe was full half a mile from shore did they pluck up courage to betake themselves to their homes. By the time their story was told and the men had rushed down to the beach to investigate,

Waihit and Ralph were almost out of sight, and pursuit was impossible.

Right warmly did the two congratulate themselves upon their escape from so great danger.

"Truly the Lord cares for His own, Waihit," said Ralph. "We have wonderfully been preserved, and we cannot thank Him enough for His goodness to us."

Waihit fully shared in the spirit of gratitude, and so they had a little praise-meeting while they rested awhile and took breath after their excessive exertion with the paddles. Waihit always carried a sail in his canoe, and when the wind rose, it being in the right direction, they hoisted the sail and glided along at such a rate as to render the use of the paddles unnecessary. Ere mid-day they got safely back to Anelcauhat, where they found the Reddies in a state of the keenest concern. Indeed they had well-nigh given them up for lost, supposing that the canoe had been overwhelmed by the storm, and when they appeared safe and sound and told their story, Mr. Reddie was so carried away by joy that nothing would do but they must sing the doxology right there on the beach ere going up to the house. Having eaten nothing since noon of the previous day, Ralph and Waihit felt simply ravenous, and as soon as the rejoicings over their happy return had subsided they clamoured for something to eat. Fortunately they had arrived just in time for

dinner, and Mrs. Reddie had to offer them a fine roast of pork prepared in the native fashion, to which and the other items of the simple bill of fare they did more than ample justice.

After this adventure Ralph was more cautious in going out to sea in either boat or canoe. He had no desire to give the people of Tana another chance to make "long-pig" of him, and so he contented himself with keeping closer to the land when he went sailing or fishing. For some time after this matters proceeded very quietly and smoothly at the mission station. The preaching services were well attended by reverent and interested congregations, the day-schools taught by Mr. and Mrs. Reddie had plenty of well-behaved pupils, and every week the hearts of the faithful workers were cheered by additions to the ranks of those who gave up heathenism for Christianity.

Ralph was fully occupied all the time, and very happy in both his work and recreation. He had become thoroughly expert in the management of the printing-press, and turned out hundreds of copies of hymns, and leaflets containing passages of Scripture, doing his work so well as to win Mr. Reddie's warm commendation.

" You are proving a real blessing to me, Ralph," he said one evening, as, sitting on the verandah of the house, they reviewed the work of the day.

" You're coming was plainly providential, for I not only needed just such help as you have been giving me, but I was feeling so lonely without a fellow-worker, and your company has cheered me more than I can express."

Ralph's face flushed warmly at the missionary's words. He had as keen an appreciation of praise as anybody, and it was extremely pleasant to receive so handsome a compliment from the man whom he looked up to as little short of perfection.

" I cannot tell you how glad I am, Mr. Reddie, that I have been of any use to you," he answered. " It has done me ever so much good to be here. When I was on board the *Osprey* I thought that the finest thing in the world was to be captain of a whaling-ship, and to make a lot of cruises, bringing your ship home full to the hatches with oil every time, and then, when you'd had enough of it, to settle down in New Bedford, and have a handsome house and plenty of servants, and horses and carriages and all that sort of thing."

" And you don't hold the same views now ? " Mr. Reddie queried, with a tender smile on his lips, when Ralph paused to take breath.

" No, sir," Ralph responded emphatically; " I'd rather be a successful missionary than the richest man in New Bedford or Boston, and, if I am spared, that's what I'm going to be."

"God bless you, Ralph!" exclaimed the missionary, throwing his arms about him in an unwonted impulse of affection. "You've chosen the better part, and although it is not given us to see into the future, I believe in my heart that God has appointed you for the work, and that you are destined to win glorious victories for Him in the years to come."

They talked on until late that night, and when they separated Ralph went to his room in such an elevation of spirit as he had never before felt.

He did not just know how it was to be brought about, but he had perfect confidence that God, who had guided his steps so plainly thus far, would make the way no less clear in the future, and his mind harboured no anxiety on that account. His thoughts often went back to the *Osprey*, and he felt a great longing to know how matters were progressing on the good ship; whether or not the casks were filling with oil, and how dear big Sakaio was getting on; and whether Mr. Houghton ever thought of him, now that he was so far away.

"I do hope the ship will come back here before she goes home," he said to himself. "It'll be a terrible disappointment to me if she doesn't, and Captain Sampson promised he would if it were not impossible. Oh, but how glad I'll be to see them all if they do come back!"

While he thus soliloquised, the *Osprey* was a thousand miles and more away, ranging over the boundless ocean from cruising-ground to cruising-ground, meeting with a fair share of luck, and drawing nearer the goal Captain Sampson had set for himself—to wit, the filling of every cask that he had on board.

Now, while the missionary's work was going on steadily and hopefully, the great enemy of souls was not yet overcome, nor was he permitting one of his strongholds to be taken from him without further resistance. As has been already made clear, Mr. Reddie, in his Christ-like labours, had not only the savagery of the natives to overcome, but the persistent opposition of the sandal-wood traders, who were highly incensed at the prospect of being deprived of their power over the people, and of having their opportunities for the unlicensed indulgence of their lust and greed circumscribed, if not altogether taken away.

The visit of the *Pollux* had made an impression that kept them quiet for a good while, but as the time went by without a return of the man-of-war, and the missionary cause prospered so as to threaten serious interference with their nefarious business, they determined upon one more attempt to expel those whom they considered intruders, and to regain their supremacy.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ENEMY'S LAST EFFORT

THE final effort of the sandal-wood men to frighten Mr. Reddie from the island was well timed as regarded the chances of success.

According to arrangement a large number of the Christian natives, comprising many of the missionary's most influential adherents, had set out to make a tour of the island, visiting the other settlements, holding meetings, and cheering the native teachers who had been labouring at Epege and elsewhere. They left on Monday morning, and Mr. Reddie, who with Ralph and Namuri was to follow in the boat, spent the day getting his craft ready and making other preparations.

Waihit had volunteered to remain in charge of Mrs. Reddie and the children, as the whole party would probably be absent several days.

That night the members of the missionary's household retired to rest in apparently perfect security, and the silence of sleep had brooded over the home for some hours, when shortly before

midnight, Ralph being half-awakened by a dream before he turned over to resume his sleep, was startled into complete wakefulness by a crackling on the roof above him that sounded strangely like a fire.

Instantly he sprang out of bed and ran to the door. Looking up, he was horrified to find that his ears had not played him false. The roof was on fire and burning freely.

There was not a moment to be lost. Rushing to the door of Mr. Reddie's room he knocked loudly, calling out, "Mr. Reddie, the house is on fire; get up!"

Sound asleep as he had been, the missionary almost immediately appeared in his night-dress and asked quietly, "Where, Ralph? Can we stop it?"

"It's the roof, sir," replied Ralph; "and we must get to work at once."

By this time Mrs. Reddie had risen and awakened the children. Throwing some wraps about them hastily, they went out into the garden, while Mr. Reddie and Ralph hurried to arouse the native servants who occupied a couple of huts near by.

With praiseworthy promptitude a little fire brigade was formed under Mr. Reddie's directions, and buckets of water from the well were passed from hand to hand until they could be thrown upon the roof. This, being thatched with sugar-cane

leaf which was thoroughly dry and combustible, blazed away fiercely, and for a time it seemed as if all efforts to save the house would be vain. But, happily, the night was perfectly calm, there was no wind to fan the flames, and after an hour's anxious toil they were completely subdued and the danger overcome.

A careful examination revealed the hideous truth that the fire was no accident, but a deliberate plot on the part of an enemy, for on the roof were found a half-burned brand and a quantity of combustible material.

On discovering this Mr. Reddie at once sent for Nohoat, the chief of the native settlement at Anelcauhat, and a man of great influence, who had not yet embraced Christianity, but seemed hovering on the verge of a decision to do so.

He manifested great concern and indignation at seeing what had been so foully attempted, even bursting into tears in the stress of his feelings, and assured Mr. Reddie that no pains would be spared to sift the matter to the bottom and if possible to find out the guilty ones.

Although it was the middle of the night the alarm had spread throughout the settlement, and a large crowd of men, women, and children quickly gathered, all in a high state of excitement and full of sympathy for the missionary, and of indignation

at the vile plot against him. By questioning a number of them Mr. Reddie got a clue to the perpetrators of the detestable deed.

It seemed that the preceding day there had been a meeting of the heathen party at the sandal-wood establishment for the purpose of concerting measures that would be effectual in driving away the missionary, and although there was no distinct testimony as to the burning of the mission station being then determined upon, still it was clear beyond a doubt that among those who were at this conference were the persons who had plotted the burning of the house and had done their best to carry it out.

One native told how these individuals had shaken hands with Captain Baddon when leaving him, and evidently parted on particularly good terms; while others related how during the afternoon there had been mysterious whispers let fall by these very persons about the missionary having his house burned over his head and being frightened from the island. Upon hearing all this Nohoat, the chief, said that he would sleep at the station for a while to insure the safety of the place, and Mr. Reddie gladly accepted the offer.

The following day was spent in repairing the damage done to the house, for which work there were many willing helpers, and in collecting information about the affair.

Nohoat showed great zeal in the latter business, and succeeded in securing the names of all the ring-leaders. He also learned that, while one party was to burn the dwelling-house, another party had been detailed to burn the church.

On hearing this, Mr. Reddie determined upon appointing sentinels for the night, and a number of the natives were divided into watches, who took turns in mounting guard. This precaution proved to be a wise one, for in the midst of the night two dark figures were perceived by the vigilant watchers creeping stealthily towards the chapel.

At once a hue and cry was raised and they made their escape, but not before they had, in the confusion of their flight, dropped a bundle containing combustible stuff that was unquestionably intended for the destruction of the chapel.

Next day there gathered at the station the entire Christian portion of the settlement, all of them being profoundly affected, and many in so high a state of indignation that it only needed a word from the missionary to have set them off to attack the sandal-wood establishment, and destroy its buildings by way of revenge. But Mr. Reddie's counsel was of an entirely different character.

"No, no, my dear people," he said gently, yet firmly, so that they might be in no doubt as to his being in earnest, "we must not return evil for evil.

This is only an attempt on the part of Satan to stop the good work that is going on amongst you, and God will take care of His own. Do not be frightened or discouraged ; light will come out of darkness, and victory out of opposition. Let us all be patient, and wait for the revealing of the Lord's will."

Now Ralph was disposed to dissent from these pacific counsels. He thought that the sandal-wood men deserved a lesson at any rate, and now that the Christian party was greatly in the majority, it could not fail to have a wholesome effect if they were to march down upon the establishment in full force, and although they stopped short of actual violence, yet give the scoundrels there a fright that would make them behave better in the future.

So strongly did he feel on the subject that he ventured to express himself quite frankly to Mr. Reddie.

"Don't you think, sir ?" he asked in a tone that showed he had no doubt upon the point, "that it would be a good thing to give the rascals down at the sandal-wood place a big scare. They've done their best to frighten us out of our wits by burning our house over our heads. Why not try the same game upon them ? We're strong enough now to carry everything before us, and they certainly deserve to get a taste of their own medicine."

"O Ralph !" responded the missionary in a half-

bantering, half-reproving way, "you believe in fighting the devil with fire, do you? Well, it may be the only thing to do sometimes, but this is not one of the times, in my judgment. We certainly have had to endure much at the hands of the wicked men, and perhaps the end is not yet. But I would rather trust in God than in any human device or strategy. At the same time, I shall not fail to let those men know that their evil plot has been fully discovered, and that I shall hold them responsible for any harm that may be done us."

Silenced, but not altogether satisfied—for it did seem to him that punishment should be meted out in some form—Ralph made no further suggestions, but that very afternoon an exciting scene took place which made him think that his advice was not perhaps so far astray after all.

Mr. Reddie, whose confidence in the protection of Providence was nothing short of sublime, had set out for a walk, accompanied by his wife and the children. Ralph followed a little behind, having Namuri and Waihit with him. Their indignation against the sandal-wood men was still hot, and if they could have had their own way they certainly would have taken steps to manifest their feelings.

The missionary had not gone far when he came upon a crowd of people engaged in earnest conversation. There were both heathen and Christian

natives in the party, the former being armed, and most of them smeared with paint and oil, signifying that they were ready to fight.

Among these was Thero, the man who had been principally instrumental in setting fire to the mission house. Not a whit daunted by the spear this man carried, Mr. Reddie at once went up to him and said—

"Why did you try to burn my house, Thero? I never did you any harm. I am here to do you good. Why would you injure me?"

On being thus taken to task the big heathen blusteringly protested that he had had nothing to do with the setting fire to the house. At this moment Ralph, Waihit, and Namuri came up, and Waihit asked Mr. Reddie if Thero was indeed one of the incendiaries.

Being answered in the affirmative he seized the man's right arm while Namuri grasped his left, and then staring steadily into his face he demanded sternly: "Why do you tell such lies? Do we not know that you did it? Confess now!" and he shook him as though he would shake the words out of him.

The great ruffian was now thoroughly terrified. He trembled like a leaf, and several of his party, fearing that violence would be done him, raised their spears menacingly.

Feeling that matters had gone far enough, and anxious to avoid an open rupture, Mr. Reddie then interposed, and yielding to his entreaties Waihit released Thero, although from the expression of his countenance it was clear enough that, were he allowed to have his own way, he would give the fellow a sound thrashing at the very least.

Two other men who were known to be accomplices of Thero's were seized and brought to Mr. Reddie, but he set them both at liberty, and matters were quieting down somewhat, when who should appear upon this scene but the head of the sandal-wood establishment, holding a large pistol in his hand, and accompanied by one of his European subordinates.

It was evident from Captain Baddon's appearance that he was in a high state of tension. His face was pale, his mouth was drawn, and his frame trembled visibly, though not with fear.

His companion, a thick-set, bulldog type of man, named Underwood, kept his hand upon the long sheath-knife that hung at his belt, and seemed to be spoiling for a fight.

By this time Ralph was fairly quivering with suppressed feeling. The whole conduct and attitude of the sandal-wood men and their minions seemed to him so utterly unwarranted that his loyal heart was roused to its very depth, and he simply burned to break away from the passive position Mr. Reddie

had imposed upon all his adherents. When Captain Baddon without any preface proceeded to pour out a volume of most foul abuse, aimed not only at the missionary but at his wife also, Ralph clenched his fists, and his breath came in quick, short pants.

"Do you hear him, Waihit?" he cried, turning to the stalwart native. "We must stop him."

Waihit reached out to seize a club that one of the others held, and at that moment Captain Baddon raised his pistol.

This was altogether more than Ralph could stand. Darting in between the truculent bully and Mr. Reddie, he snatched the pistol out of the former's hand and flung it far away from him, crying, "You villain! would you dare?"

So sudden and swift was the action that neither Baddon nor Underwood had a chance to oppose it, and the pistol, in striking the ground twenty yards distant, went off with a loud report, the heavy bullet burying itself harmlessly in the earth.

For the moment following the report there was neither speech nor movement. The chief actors in the thrilling scene stood as motionless and silent as if petrified, and then Mr. Reddie, seizing the critical instant, called out in a clear commanding voice: "Listen all! Let the clubs and spears be put down. Stand still while I speak, or else this may be the most sorrowful day in your lives."

Slight and small as he was, the missionary could not have inspired more respect had he been of gigantic stature. Instinctively those thronging about him, who, but for his steadfast interposition, might have been shedding one another's blood, drew apart, falling into two groups, of which the Christians far outnumbered the heathens.

Mr. Reddie then proceeded to address them, ever turning from one to the other so as to keep all his hearers under the influence of his eye. Answering the false charges of Captain Baddon, he told how he had come to Aneytum from a country on the other side of the world, just that the islanders might have the gospel and be redeemed from sin. He pointed out that personally he had nothing to gain by this, that his motives were entirely unselfish, and that he sought only the present and eternal good of the people.

He then went on to say that anything like violence or making war was utterly foreign to his purpose, that he was the servant of the Prince of Peace, and that, no matter how he might be threatened or imperilled, he would not consent to have clubs or spears used in his defence. He was in God's hands, and he feared nothing that man could do against him.

In this strain he spoke at some length, and the effect was nothing short of wonderful. His own

followers were soothed into a pacific frame, even Waihit losing his ferocious look, and Ralph being made to feel somewhat ashamed of his belligerent impulse.

As for the heathen party they seemed thoroughly ashamed of themselves, and Captain Baddon slunk away in silence, followed by his satellite, who growled out some low oath as he turned his broad back upon the missionary.

The victory was gloriously complete. So profound was the change of sentiment wrought by it, that the sandal-wood men were deserted by nearly all the natives, and not long afterwards left the island, never to return.

When the excitement had all subsided, and the missionary party had returned to the station in peace, not without honour, Ralph felt bound to apologise for venturing to interfere as he had done, but Mr. Reddie, resting his hand affectionately upon his shoulder, checked him half-way.

"I quite understand how it was, Ralph. You did what was perfectly natural. Let us be thankful that the bullet did no more harm than to make a hole in the ground."

The following Sunday was a memorable one in the history of the mission. All the services were attended by unprecedently large and attentive congregations, and a number of influential men, who

had hitherto held aloft, announced their determination to renounce heathenism, and accept the "new religion."

Next morning, Ralph, who happened to be the first up, on looking out to sea, was filled with delight at seeing two large vessels approaching the harbour. They were coming on steadily under full sail, and his heart throbbed with eager expectation as they drew near.

At last all doubt was dispelled. There was no fear of disappointment, and, wheeling about, he rushed back into the house crying joyfully—

"Mr. Reddie! Mr. Reddie! The *Osprey* and the *Pollux* are coming into the harbour!"

CHAPTER XXIV

HOME AGAIN

RALPH's glad announcement soon brought the whole family to the front of the house, and so lively was the joy of all at the sight of the two ships that a chance spectator might well have supposed that some near and dear relatives were on board.

But, though there were no kin by blood on the stately vessels, both Mr. Reddie and Ralph felt that those who were akin to them by strong bonds of friendship would soon be clasping hands with them, and the disturbing events of the preceding week had rendered the advent of their fellow-countrymen especially timely and welcome.

Nothing would do Ralph but he must bring out his musket, and, having taken up his station in a prominent place, at a safe distance from the others, he hastened to fire off blank charges in quick succession.

This impromptu salute was at once observed on board the war-ship, and responded to with one of the small cannon, whereupon the *Osprey*, not to be

outdone, joined in with a volley of musketry, every gun on board being utilised, so that the combined reports fairly made the welkin ring, and struck terror into the hearts of the natives until they saw what it all meant, and were thereby reassured.

As soon as the ships had come to anchor, boats were lowered from both, and a very exciting race took place between the man-of-war cutter and Captain Sampson's whale-boat as to which should first touch the shore, the result being a win for the whale-boat by a short length, whereat the Jack-tars gave a magnanimous cheer, and softened their defeat by the consideration that the victors had the faster boat, which indeed was true enough.

Very hearty were the greetings exchanged between the two captains and Mr. Reddie and Ralph.

Captain Macaulay had plenty of news for the missionary, and best of all was the announcement that on board the *Pollux* was the Rev. Mr. Ellis, the long-prayed-for associate in the mission field, who had been sent by one of the great English missionary societies to share with him in the toils and triumphs of the work.

Mr. Reddie rejoiced greatly at this announcement. The way for the extension of Christianity over the whole island had been opened up wonderfully of late. With the co-operation of the new-comer he would be able to carry out plans hitherto beyond

his power, and his heart overflowed with joy at the prospect of future triumphs, far surpassing what had been already achieved.

At Captain Macaulay's invitation, he went back to the ship in order to meet Mr. Ellis, and welcome him to the island.

As for Ralph, he fairly overwhelmed Captain Sampson with a torrent of eager inquiries.

"How was Mr. Houghton, and Sakaio, and the others?" Not even his whilom tormentors, the carpenter, the blacksmith, and Soupey, were omitted.

At last the captain was fain to say laughingly—

"Upon my word, Ralph, the best thing you can do is to come back to the ship with me, and see them all for yourself. Jump aboard, and we'll shove off."

Right glad was Ralph to obey, and a few minutes later he was in the midst of his old friends, who well-nigh mobbed him in their eagerness to shake him by the hand, and ask him how it had been with him during the year of separation.

The chief-mate wrung his hand until the bones cracked. Sakaio would not be content with anything short of a genuine hug. Soupey hung about shyly, until Ralph broke through the circle with extended hand, saying cordially, "Why, what a big chap you've got to be! You're bigger than I am, I believe."

Soupey's face beamed at this compliment, and he did his best to reciprocate by stammering out

something to the effect that Ralph had grown a lot too, and was every bit as big as he was himself.

When matters had settled down a bit, Ralph was given an account of the doings on board the good ship *Osprey* since he left her.

To his great satisfaction he learned that the result of her year's cruising over the southern grounds had been that she was full to the hatches, and that, if she safely reached New Bedford, Captain Sampson would be wealthy enough to retire from the business, while all the members of his company, from the chief-mate down to Soupey, would have handsome shares, in proportion to their rank.

"Nor will you be left out, Ralph," said Mr. Houghton kindly, "although you did desert us. I arranged that with the captain at the time. Your share will be just the same as if you had been with us all the time."

"How good you are to me!" Ralph exclaimed. "I'm sure I don't deserve half your kindness."

"Oh, well, you know we can have our own opinions about that," was the smiling response, which left no doubt as to the speaker's view of the matter.

After a happy hour on board the *Osprey*, Ralph went over to the *Pollux*, where he was warmly received by Mr. Leigh the botanist, Mr. Holland the midshipman, and the rest of the officers, and had

to answer a thousand and one questions about his life upon the island.

Mr. Reddie was so delighted at the return of the two ships, and the advent of Mr. Ellis, whom he at once perceived to be admirably adapted for the good work, that he determined to give a feast in celebration of the auspicious occasion. He accordingly took council with Nohoat, the powerful old chief, Waihit, his right-hand man, and others, and they all entered heartily into the scheme.

The feast came off on the next Saturday, and proved an unqualified success. Captain Macaulay and almost his entire staff of officers, and Captain Sampson, and the chief men of the *Osprey*, including, of course, Sakaio and his fellow-harpooneers, were the guests, and the banquet provided was certainly well worthy of the sharpest appetite.

Roast pork and baked fish, daintily served on broad green leaves instead of plates, fruit in bewildering variety; the milk of young cocoa-nuts drunk right out of the shell, and other delicacies only to be enjoyed in the tropics, made up the bill of fare. Dusky maidens, neatly attired in white cotton dresses, and having their dark tresses entwined with brilliant flowers, were the attendants. Mrs. Reddie and her daughters graced the festal board by their presence, and nothing occurred to mar the joyous harmony of what Captain Macaulay

declared to be the most delightful social experience of his service in the southern seas. In the afternoon there were amusements of various kinds. The natives danced and sang after their own fashion, and then under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Reddie sang a number of Christian hymns which they had learned, and which they rendered with remarkable sweetness and power. But the great event of the afternoon was the boat race. Ever since the arrival of the two ships together there had been good-humoured chaffing going on between the members of their crews as to their respective prowess with the oars, and several little brushes had taken place without any decisive advantage on either side.

It had accordingly been arranged with the approval of the captains that a definite test should be had, and the day of the feast was agreed upon. As the sun sank in the west and the air began to cool, the preparations for the race were hurried on, and soon the contestants were ready for the start.

The captain's gig as a matter of course represented the *Pollux*, while the chief-mate's boat appeared as the champion of the *Osprey*. To Ralph's unspeakable joy and pride Mr. Houghton invited him to be steersman, a lighter oar than usual being rigged for his benefit, and greatly to Midshipman Holland's satisfaction he was entrusted with the tiller of the gig.

The course was to be from deep water at the shore, out and around a part of the reef and back to the beach, the first boat to touch the sand being the winner. Captain Macaulay and Captain Sampson were the judges, with Mr. Reddie as referee in the event of their not being able to decide.

Intense was the excitement as the two boats got into line for the start. Every point of vantage on the shore had its group of eager spectators, while the yards of both ships were manned by the sailors who had not landed. Ralph's heart beat as though it would burst its bonds of flesh, and his mouth was so parched that he scarce could speak.

After some little manoeuvring the word "Go" was given by Mr. Houghton, and at the same instant the eight oar-blades were plunged into the water, while the air rang with the shouts of the sailors encouraging their own men.

There was a marked difference in the stroke of the two sets of oarsmen, the Jack-tars pulling a short, quick, splashing stroke that was well enough adapted for the craft they rowed, but the whalers had a long, sweeping, powerful stroke that seemed better suited for a long race.

Although a year had elapsed since he last heard the chief-mate's strident tones as he urged on his men in pursuit of the escaping whale, much of what he said came back to Ralph's memory in the excite-

ment of the contest, and he now shouted it out at the top of his voice, unconsciously mimicking his model as he did so.

"Lift her, my hearties, lift her; bend your backs to it; make your bones crack; the oars won't break, they're the best of ash. Bend them! Bend them at every stroke! That's the way to do it, altogether from start to finish; drive her into it; make her snort. Lift her, I tell you, lift her!"

Even in the throes of their intense exertion the oarsmen could hardly help smiling at Ralph's strenuous urgings, he had so evidently taken a leaf out of the chief-mate's book, and from the way they gave themselves to the work it certainly appeared as if he himself could not possibly have got more out of them. At first the British boat drew away from the American, its short, quick stroke giving it an advantage at the start, and all the way to the reef it led by a clear length of open water. This distressed Ralph greatly, and he danced about in the stern of the boat shouting wildly at his men, and swinging the steering-oar to and fro in a manner of which Mr. Houghton would hardly have approved.

"Spring to it! Spring to it!" he shouted. "We must beat them. We must, I tell you."

But the veteran rowers never altered their powerful stroke; no, nor slackened their mighty grip upon their oars, and when the boats had turned

and straightened out for home their splendid work began to tell.

Foot by foot they gained upon the Englishmen in spite of Holland's frantic appeals to his rowers and the vigour with which he flung his body forward and backward in time with their stroke.

Presently the gap between the two boats was closed, and the bow of Ralph's had come up with the stern of the other's.

Holland yelled and screamed in his excitement, and the men tugged at their stout ash blades until they bent like bows, but it was all in vain. Still maintaining their long steady sweep the whalesmen crept up, and Ralph's cries to them took on a triumphant tone as victory seemed possible after all. But two hundred yards of the course remained, and the *Pollux*'s boat still led by a third of her own length. Then, at last, the stroke oar of the *Osprey*'s crew, glancing over his shoulder, said to his companions, "Now, then, hit her up for all you're worth."

The spurt that followed in response was magnificent. The men really seemed to lift their boat out of the water. At every stroke the British lead was lessened, and Ralph's joy was beyond all expression when he found himself side by side with Holland.

Then the Jack-tars made one final, desperate rally. Rising from their seats, they threw their whole weight as well as their strength upon the

oars, and thus, amid a tremendous volume of cheering, to which everybody looking on contributed their note, the two boats dashed up to the beach, touching the sand at so precisely the same moment that the judges and the referee had no difficulty whatever in pronouncing the result a dead heat.

This was satisfactory to both parties, for although it left the question of supremacy unsettled, it made it clear that the grand old British stock had lost nothing by being transplanted to America, and Jack-tar, taking council with his American cousin over the event, met a hearty response to the declaration that no other nations in the world could produce oarsmen to beat either of the contestants.

The following Sunday was a thrice-memorable one in the history of the mission. All who could be spared from the two ships attended the services, which were held in the open air, for the little chapel would not have accommodated one-fourth of the congregation, and very impressive was the sight as this strangely-mixed gathering of Englishmen, Americans, and South Sea Islanders joined reverently in the worship of the One True God.

In the afternoon Ralph had a long walk with Mr. Houghton, in the course of which the chief-mate asked him about his plans for the future.

Ralph then opened his heart to him. His determination to devote his life to missionary work

was fixed beyond reconsideration. But he realised that his education was deficient. Mr. Reddie's learning inspired him with a noble envy. The college course which he had been persuaded to take up two years before, only to please his mother, he now eagerly aspired to, and if Providence opened the way he would gladly give himself to study. Since Mr. Ellis had come to join Mr. Reddie, there was not the same need for him to remain, and so he would like to go back in the *Osprey*, and, if possible, enter upon a college course that would fit him for future work in some part of the mission-field.

Mr. Houghton listened to him with deep interest, and when he had finished, said, with evident emotion in his voice: "This seems so strange, Ralph. You have taken the very words out of my mouth. I have just been waiting for the chance to say to you the same thing that you have told to me. And now all that I can add is this. I will be responsible for the whole cost of your college education. Now, don't shake your head, Ralph. I'm all alone in the world, Ralph, having neither chick nor child, and when this cruise is settled up I'll have more than a tidy bit of money to my name, and to what better use could I put it?"

And so upon this basis the matter was arranged. Mr. Reddie heartily approved of the plan when it was laid before him, and, ere the week closed,

Ralph, with brimming eyes and quivering lips, bade farewell to the heroic little missionary, upon whose monument in an Australian cemetery was hereafter to be written this remarkable yet perfectly accurate inscription: "When he landed at Aneytum there were no *Christians* there, and when he left there were no *heathen*."

It was not easy parting from him and from his lovely wife and children, who had grown so dear, but the future was full of glorious promise, and there was for them all the high assurance that though they might never look into each other's faces again this side of heaven, there was a world beyond, where, in God's good time, there would be a reunion of infinite gladness.

The homeward voyage of the *Osprey* was marred by no mishap, and in late summer she sailed proudly into New Bedford harbour with a fortune under hatches, as the result of her three years' cruise.

In the autumn Ralph entered college, and there we shall take leave of him, for years of hard study and earnest preparation were to elapse ere he again would be in the swing of the sea, bound for the foreign mission-field to which his life was consecrated.

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